













**ALEXANDER POPE**  
**Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot**

**WITH CRITICAL INTRODUCTION, TEXT,  
EXHAUSTIVE NOTES & QUESTIONS ETC.**

**Dr. C. L. Sastri, M.A., Ph. D.**  
*Head of the Deptt. of English*  
**W. G. B. COLLEGE, BHIMAVARAM**

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## **PREFACE**

Alexander Pope is a difficult poet. The reader requires a knowledge of the contemporary men and matters for a proper appreciation of Pope's poetry. The author has this in mind while preparing this book, and particularly the difficulties of Indian students.

With the critical introduction, exhaustive notes, striking passages and questions, etc., it is hoped that the book meets with all the requirements of students in Indian Universities.

The author acknowledges his grateful thanks to his colleague, Mr. S. Subbarao for going through the manuscript.

C, L. S.



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**INTRODUCTION  
TO  
ALEXANDER POPE'S  
EPISTLE TO DR. ARBUTHNOT**





# I

## LIFE AND WORK

ALEXANDER POPE (1688-1744) was a English poet of considerable repute and was usually regarded as the literary dictator of his age. As William Rose Benet would remark, "his poetry is characterised by satire, epigram, didacticism, smoothness and technical finish, invective, biting and malicious wit, and skilful use of the closed or heroic couplet." He flourished in an age when the influence of the French literature was more marked than in the age of his predecessor, Dryden. It meant greater attention to lucidity of expression elegance of form and perfection of manner.

He was born in a Roman Catholic family in Lombard Street, London. His father was a linen-draper who made some money in his trade. There were severe governmental restrictions against Catholics after the Revolution of 1688 and therefore Pope was unable to attend a public school or a university. As Mr. George Sampson remarks, "his feeble health denied him a school, his faith denied him a university." He was nick-named "the little nightingale" on account of his melodious voice. Pope was first sent to a Roman Catholic School at Twyford near Winchester. Then he was sent to a private school kept by Thomas Deone, first at Marylebone, and then at Hyde Park Corner. But he was soon withdrawn from it and was left to his own private efforts. Thus Pope missed the intensely classical education of his day though he proved himself later on to be the most intensely classical of English poets. George Sampson is of opinion that this had its own advantages, for Pope "grew up in an indulgent home on the verge of Windsor Forest, and his intellectual isolation gave him intellectual freedom." He must have read and written incessantly. As he himself would admit, he studied French, Italian, Latin and Greek as well as English poets, "like a boy gathering flowers". And the flowers he gathered were indeed precious. His scholarship was not however perfect, but that was what his voracious reading could give. "He was completely disingenuous" and "he submitted his juvenile efforts for criticism and correction" by the older men.

Thus Pope paved his poetic way by a tenacity of purpose and industry. Throughout his youth, he read, read, and read books—books classical and books modern. He finished epics and tragedy in his early teens and he studied Homer, Tasso, Ariosto, Virgil, Ovid etc., in his youth. Poetry, criticism and drama—be it in the original or in translation—also came under his careful purview. Thus if he became a miracle of genius, it was because he was a miracle of industry. Paracelsus gave him style. The old Wycherley acted as his mentor. Dryden was impressed with his promise.

Pope was singularly unimpressive in his personal appearance. Bad health and physical deformity marred his life. Rose Benet says that he became a hunchback and cripple as the result of a serious illness in childhood and that he “relieved his sense of rancour in jealous, spiteful, and venomous attacks on his contemporaries,” and that because of this, he was nicknamed as the *Wicked Wasp of Twickenham*, from the name of the London suburb where he lived. We have also the authority of George Saintsbury to say that the disagreeable parts of Pope's character could be traced to his bad health and deformity and were not therefore congenital. But Arthur Compton-Rickett observes : “A body of miserable weakness was a heritage from birth—headaches from his mother and a crooked figure from his father.” Whether congenital or not, the fact of his feeble health remains and it is a matter for unprofitable speculation. His physical weakness was constant and he could not even dress himself without aid. He was easily susceptible to cold and he was often “compelled to wear a fur doublet under his coarse linnen shirt. Johnson's remark on Pope is interesting to note in this context. “When he (Pope) rose, he was invested in boddices made of stiff canvas, being scarcely able to hold himself erect till they were laced, and he then put on a flannel waistcoat. One side was contracted. His legs were so slender that he enlarged their bulk with three pairs of stockings, which were drawn on and off by the maid.”

It is not a little curious how such a feeble man could manage to become a noted poet of his age. Mr. Compton-Rickett is correct when he says : “What fate did not deny to the man, Alexander Pope, was all-dominating love for the craft of poetry.” It is again curious how with “Small Latin and less Greek”, Pope became a famous translator of Homer. This again seems to be Fortune's favour to Pope.

While still a child Pope "lisped in numbers." It was an admitted fact that he was extremely precocious. On the authority of Mr. Compton-Rickett, "His education was fragmentary and superficial, and all of it that mattered he imbibed for himself, not from the seminary near Winchester, whither for a time he had gone. Thrown on his resources, sickly in body and lonely in spirit he found his only delight in books : and these he read, as he tells us, *like a boy gathering flowers in the field just as they fell his way.*"

His earliest work was *Pastorals*. These were poems alleged to have been written at an early age and under the encouragement of William Trumbal, the Secretary of State. They went from hand to hand for criticism and comment, for suggestions and for improvement. Thus they were carefully overseen and revised. They were, of course, "quite in the fashion of the day, with the usual conventional Strephous Daphnes, and orthodox pagan deities in an English religious setting of the most artificial type." This set of pastorals was published in 1709. The book attracted favourable notice but the poems were regarded as bookish and the verse uninspiring, though carefully modulated and with evident mastery of his metre. But the writer was young and at that period, the pastoral was a literary exercise.

We have the authority of Mr. Compton-Rickett again, to say that Pope "found himself, his public and fame", in his next publication, namely, "An Essay on Criticism" (1711). In this he discussed the principles of his art, turning for inspiration to Horace and others. Of course, most of his utterances were commonplace statements, but they took a permanent form in literature on account of the writer's genius for poetic aphorism ! No wonder, Pope became very famous with this work !

"The Rape of the Lock" followed and was published in 1712. It is a famous poetic satire unmatched in English poetry. It is an epic of triflings. But we find in it, the artificial tone of the age and the frivolous aspect of femininity were exquisitely pictured. It deals with how Lord Petre, in a thoughtless moment of frolic gallantry, cut off a lock of Arabella Fermor's hair, which act led to a bitter feud between the two families. Alexander Pope worked on this theme and produced the best mock-heroic poem of the language. William Hazlitt calls this "an exquisite specimen of filigree work", for being a blend of the mock-heroic, the satirical and the fanciful. Mr. Compton-

Rickett rightly remarks : "It is the epic of triflings, a page torn from the petty, pleasure-seeking life of a fashionable beauty ; the *mise en scene* the toilet chamber and the card table. In short, the veritable apotheosis in literary guise of scent, patches, and powder." Addison admired it very warmly and called it *merum sal* and advised Pope not to risk spoiling it by introducing the new machinery of the sylphs. But Pope misunderstood the advice and mistook it for jealousy. Of course, Pope altered the 1712 version of the poem and enlarged it greatly and with great success. It, no doubt, shows "extraordinary skill in the lighter kind of verse, and reflects with singular felicity the tone of the best society of the day". His *Windsor Forest* published in 1713 appealed to the Tories very well due to its references to the Peace of Utrecht, and won him the friendship of Swift. Pope slowly drifted away from the *little senate* of Addison and joined the *Scriblerus Club* which was an informal association of Swift, Gay, Arbuthnot, Atterbury and others.

Pope's literary activity was not only intense but varied. He made a sustained attempt to present passion and pathos in the two poems (of uncertain date but included in the collected works of 1717) called *Eloisa to Abelard* and the *Elegy to the Memory of an Unfortunate Lady*. But, the attempt was not successful. He also wrote three epistles, one to *Mr. Jervas with Dryden's translation of Fresnoy's Art of Painting*, a second to *A young Lady with the works of Voiture*, and the third to *the same on her leaving the town after the Coronation*. He also contributed to Gay and Arbuthnots, *Three Hours after Marriage*. Pope had no gift for song, nor did he have any lyrical quality in his poetry. And this is evident from his *Ode for Music on Saint Cecilia's Day*.

Pope published his translation of Homer's *Iliad* in six volumes ; the first four, in 1715, 1716, 1717, 1718 and the last two in 1720. In the volumes, he made the readers hear Homer in the accents of their time. This translation was the fruit of Pope's arduous labour for ten years, and it was indeed "a remarkable achievement for one of Pope's delicate health and limited knowledge of Greek". The work had its own faults. It was not Homer, it was a poem. Mr. Bentley makes a caustic remark on the work : "It is a pretty poem, Mr. Pope, but not Homer." Yes, Homeric breadth and vigour did not suit the fastidious niceties of Pope's Muse. But the poem was a great success,

being very rich in the felicities of the 18th century pattern. Further as George Sampson would say, "the reader who cannot find beauty in Pope is not likely to find much in Homer." The translation brought Pope both fame and money. The publisher Lintot paid him £ 200 a volume and gave 575 free copies for the subscribers. For his next translation, *The Odyssey*, Lintot paid him £ 3500 in addition to the considerable amounts paid to the assistants. Thanks to Homer, Pope prospered ! It is said that Lintot gave the author alone more than £ 9000 on the whole, but he made a fortune out of his publishing enterprise. George Sampson says : "But the homely, domestic, romantic *Odyssey* is less successful than heroic oratorical *Iliad*."

Pope invested his money securely and lived in comfort for the rest of his life. Further, "from his labours, he gained something of that solidarity and complete mastery of his materials that Shakespeare gained by writing his English Historical Plays."

On the invitation of Jacob Tousey, the bookseller, Pope brought out his new edition of Shakespeare which was published in 1725. Pope was personally disqualified for such a work and the fastidious Theobald pointed them out in his "*Shakespeare Restored*" and thereby gained the bad eminence of being the first hero of *The Dunciad* !" Pope first published *The Dunciad* anonymously, but acknowledged its authorship in 1735, emboldened by its success.

Pope, Swift, Gay and others frequently met at Arbuthnot's rooms and satire on various forms of pedantry emanated at that informal club in the person of an imaginary Martinus Scriblerus. But *The Dunciad* did not have its immediate connection with him. The real reason that provoked Pope to write *The Dunciad* was Theobald's book "*Shakespeare Restored*" whose acute criticism and severe strictures struck Pope home. But in the later edition, Theobald was dethroned and Colley Cibber made to reign in his stead.

Pope turned his poetical energy next to the writing of epistles being influenced by Bolingbroke. (1) *Epistle to the Earl of Burlington of Taste*, (2) *Of the Knowledge and Characters of Men*, (3) *Of the Characters of Women*, (4) *Essay on Man*, were all regarded as expressions of contemporary thought, though shallow. Pope wrote his famous *Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot* in

1735. This is Pope's most finished and brilliant work. *The New Dunciad* appeared in 1742.

Pope took a house at Twickenham and the spot had much to recommend it. It was a place quite congenial for the promotion of witty wisdom of the early eighteenth century but his spiritual home was the parish of St. James. Mr. Compton-Rickett says : "Here Swift, Bolingbroke, Congreve and Gay were wont to exchange wit and wisdom and perchance, to forge the weapons which were to be used in the war with the Dunces—the war which was waged on behalf of a single valueless Truth.....Here strange schemes were proposed and discussed for the launching of these literary shafts upon the wandering world.....Lastly, it was at Twickenham, on May 30, 1744, that the restless spirit of the poet finally quitted the world which it had never loved."

Pope did not marry. But he left nearly the whole of his fortune by will, to one Martha, the second daughter of Mr. Lister Blount. The gentleman was a Catholic and had two daughters named Teresa and Martha. Both of them were educated at Paris "where the natural vivacity of their dispositions had been heightened and the charm of their manners had received an additional piquancy." It was said that Pope loved and admired them both. Though he first addressed his attentions to Teresa, later Martha became the object of his love. Scandal was widespread that he offered to marry Martha at the point of death. But whatever it be, he bequeathed his property, by will, to Martha whom he loved ardently.

## II

### AGE OF POPE

ALEXANDER POPE is pre-eminently the poet of his age. The real representative of the first half of the eighteenth century was Pope and so the period is known as the Age of Pope. It is also known by several other names. Some call it the Augustan Age, some the Age of Queen Anne, and some others the Age of Prose or the Age of Good Sense and Reason. Some others also call it the Classical Age. Emperor Augustus gave the golden status to his Latin literature of his time, which came to be known after his name afterwards. Similarly, the age of Pope was regarded as the Golden Age in English literature, by the critics of his time, and hence the name, the Augustan Age. It is also called the Classical Age because the writers of this period strictly followed the style and the standards set up by the classical writers of Greece and Rome, say, like Horace and Virgil. It is known as the Age of Queen Anne because she ruled over England during this period. If it is again called the Age of Prose, Good Sense and Reason, it was because the writers were greatly influenced by the French literature and adopted the *good sense* theory of Boileau as the principal criterion for their literature. The authors of this age aimed at correctness, neatness and reason in poetry, and naturally at the expense of imagination and fancy, lack of which made their works look like prose rather than poetry. Therefore, it also came to be known as the Age of Prose, Good Sense and Reason.

This age records a tendency to a new attitude towards morality. William III and Queen Anne were sturdy moralists and the immorality of the courts was considerably checked and there was a strong revaluation of values. Morals and virtue were being preached and recommended. The immorality of the Restoration period soon began to go. Writers like Addison endeavoured their best "to enliven morality with wit, and to



temper wit with morality." In brief, the general tone of the age indeed recorded an improvement over the previous one, and reason and common-sense became the hall-marks of the period. As wit and common-sense gained laudation, as neatness, correctness and polish were preferred to poetical enthusiasm and passion, prose began to triumph and dominate and poetry to weaken and decline. Naturally the Age produced great prose writers like Addison, Steele, Defoe, Swift and others and impoverished the strains of lyrical poetry. Of course, Dryden started the exercise of his heroic couplet in the previous age and left it to Pope to achieve its heights. But, both Dryden and Pope are, strictly speaking, classics not of poetry but of prose. And we have the authority of Sir Leslie Stephen who remarks that most of Pope's works "may be fairly described as rhymed prose, differing from prose, not in substance or feeling, but only in the form of expression."

Politics played an important role in the literature of the Age. The Whigs and the Tories—the two principal political parties of England—dominated over the literary scene and influenced the men of letters of this age. The two parties were sharply divided in their political creeds and compelled the men of letters to join one camp or the other. Soon pamphlet-writing became the order of the day, and in the absence of newspapers the pamphlet became the medium of political propaganda, invective and indecent mud-slinging. The pamphlet thus became an instrument to win public opinion, to push the rival creed out of the political arena. The pamphlet-writer naturally enjoyed a status of his own, and he was purchased, if not bribed, and therefore political pamphleteering flourished beyond measure. Writers of this age took the opportunity and made the best use of it. The struggle for political supremacy also gave rise to the issue of several periodicals which resulted in the development of excellent prose. Side by side, there was the growth of several poetasters whose verses contained attacks against political rivals or flattering compliments to their political patrons. Whatever it be, the writers of this age were greatly benefited as they were amply paid for their pains. Addison for example, got a rich pension of £ 300 by pleasing Lord Halifax, with his poem—*The Peace of Ryswick*. Thus the most interesting feature of this age is that there was a close collaboration between politicians and literary men. The politics

of the age therefore contributed to the promotion of literature, whatever kind it be.

The demand of the day was wit on any subject, at any place. Therefore satire became the fashion of the age. Verses could be made to order and hack-writers flourished in plenty. Fashionable writers among them, formed their clubs which are purely literary associations branched off from the famous coffee-houses, like the Scriblerus and kit-cat clubs where they transacted literary business. Thus the age registered a considerable social development in the formation of not only mere coffee-houses but literary associations which gave a considerable impetus to the growth of the literature of the time. The publishers, whoever they might be, might have been mean, selfish and unscrupulous, but they indeed encouraged the hack-writers of the Grub Street, and relieved them from their squalor and misery. It is a case for writers like Pope to attack on them and to throw his invective bitterly against them, for they wrote for their living and did not direct their satire against sin but against the dullness and unconventionality of the age.

Strictly speaking, the Age of Pope cannot be regarded as either *Classic* or *Augustan*.

Classicism strictly connotes all the spirit behind the works of the great Greek and Latin writers. Dryden started writing with the aim of infusing the spirit of ancient classics. We see that there is indeed not much in the poetry of the Age of Dryden, or even in the Age of Pope, which we can call classical. We may be perhaps right in calling the Age of Pope as one of pseudo-classicism." Douglas Bush says, "Part of it is contained in *what oft was thought, but ne'er so well expressed*, and the number of semi-proverbial lines from Augustan poets that are lodged in our minds, are rough evidence of the finality they could give to the expression of general experience. It was natural that they should especially cherish Horace, the poet of rational moderation, witany and chiselled commonplaces." Horace's *Satires*, *Odes* and *Epistles* take as their theme every type of human folly and present a truly remarkable variety alternating with moral pieces attacking luxury and self-indulgence, or calling for plain living. The Augustans (and particularly Pope) derived their inspiration from him.

This age is usually called "the Classic Age" and it has become a convenient catch-word to denote the period. Its prominent characteristic features are: (a) didacticism and satire with emphasis on wit and cleverness, (b) play upon the surface of life without touching emotion or imagination, (c) regard for 'town' poetry and disregard for humbler aspects of life, (d) want of romanticism associated with enthusiasm or imagination, (e) care for restraint, moderation and good sense, (f) principal attention to form and polish, (g) desire for superficial elegance, leading to artificial and conventional style, and (h) fondness for the closed couplet. It has become a convention to describe the age with these features "the Classic Age" in English, but it should be remembered that the term *classic* cannot be applied to the Age of Pope, in its strictest and comprehensive sense.

Again, regarding the use of the epithet *Augustan* also, an objection may be raised. The critics of the age of Pope believed that it was the golden age of English literature. The golden age of Latin literature was undoubtedly the Augustan Age because during the time of Augustus the best of Latin literature was produced and was therefore the golden age. But the literature produced in the age of Pope, with the characteristics given above cannot justly claim the appellation *golden*. Thus the terms *Classic* and *Augustan* lose their real significance in the modern context of things, and remain only as "convenient catch-words" to denote the characteristics of this age.

### III

#### POPE AS A POET

ALEXANDER POPE enjoyed a unique reputation as a poet in his own day. But, soon after his death, the question, if he was a poet, was posed and was answered in different ways and with varying estimates.

Warton, Arnold, Wordsworth and Leslie Stephen denied Alexander Pope the place of a great poet, while Samuel Johnson, Cardinal Newman, Lowell, Lord Byron, Professor Saintsbury and De Quincey praised him warmly and assigned him a permanent place among the great poets of English Literature. Opinion being thus divided, a careful study of the several estimates is necessary before arriving at a final conclusion regarding Pope's poetry.

The antagonists of Pope see little that can be termed *poetry* in his works which, they describe, contained good prose. Warton, for example, says : "The largest portion of Pope's works is of the didactic, moral and satiric kind, and consequently not of the most poetic species of Poetry ; whence it is manifest that good sense and judgment were his characteristic excellences, rather than fancy and invention ; not because the author of *The Rape of the Lock* can be thought to want imagination ; but because his imagination was not his predominant talent." Warton is correct in his estimate of Pope, because there is too much of didacticism, satire, good sense and judgment and general want of imagination in Pope's poetry, barring a few exceptions. Matthew Arnold pronounces his judgment that Pope is a classic of prose, meaning that Pope won his reputation for qualities associated with excellent prose rather than real poetic qualities in his verse. And this is also true to an utmost extent. We also know that with the advent of the Romantic School of Poetry, Pope's reputation waned and the Romantic poets hated him and rated his poetry as being full of glossy but unfeeling diction and positive aversion to the

country-side. Naturally poets like Wordsworth, found fault with Pope's inane phraseology and unfeeling, though glossy, diction. They regarded Pope's couplets, though wonderful in their own way, as sickening, coming as they did, one after one, with all kinds of periphrases, without any originality and imagination. There is some truth in the criticism of these romantic poets but it is absurd to deny beauty and charm in Pope's use of the couplet. Wordsworth could no doubt, find noblest themes from the simple annals of the poor, but Pope never knew how to build a stately throne on humble truth. Poverty and suffering could never win his sympathy or compassion. It only provoked his vehement satire. Augustine Birrell rightly points out that Pope had a poor knowledge of

"The silence that is in the starry sky  
The sleep that is among the lonely hills".

Further, excepting the fashionable drawing-room and the polished ball-room Pope's poetic Muse never pondered over the hearts of people in the countryside. So, Wordsworth and his circle hated him for his artificial outlook and bias for city life. Again, Leslie Stephen, the biographer of Pope, expresses his view thus : "Much of his work may be fairly described as rhymed prose, not in substance or tone of feeling, but only in the form of expression. Pope's style in the *Essay on Man* is often admirable. When Pope is at his best every word tells. His precision and firmness of touch enables him to get the greatest possible meaning into a narrow compass."

But there is an equally good number of great critics who praised Pope's poetry very warmly and enthusiastically. Dr. Johnson clinches the issue and pronounces verdict, "It is surely superfluous to answer the question that has once been asked, whether Pope was a poet, otherwise than by asking in return, 'If Pope be not a poet, where is poetry to be found?' To circumscribe poetry by a definition will only show the narrowness of the definer, though a definition which shall exclude Pope will not easily be made." And we have the authority of this great literary dictator who regards Pope's *Homer* as "the noblest version of poetry the world has ever seen." Another admirer of Pope is Lowell who praises him "as the poet of the society, the delineator of manners, the exposé of those motives which may be called acquired, whose spring is in habits

and institutions of purely worldly origin." And Lowell is correct in his estimate. Pope was always virile and curiously there was never anything slipshod, in his workmanship, be it the field of satire or invective. We have again the highest encomium from Cardinal Newman who observes, "I do not claim for a great author, as such any great depth of thought, or breadth of view, or philosophy or sagacity or knowledge of human nature, or experience of human life,—though these additional gifts, and the more he has of them, the greater he is,—but I ascribe to him, as characteristic gift in a large sense, the faculty of expression.....he has the right word for the right idea, and never a word too much. If he is brief it is because few words suffice; if he is lavish of them, still each word has its mark, and aids, not embarrasses, the vigorous march of his elocution. He expresses what all feel but all cannot say and his sayings pass into proverbs and idioms of their daily speech, which is associated with the rich fragments of his language, as we see in foreign lands the marbles of Roman grandeur worked into the walls and pavements of modern palaces." This long citation from Newman reveals that a writer of this calibre cannot but be a poet of great eminence and worth.

Wilson and Byron are among the great admirers of Pope. The former assigns Pope a place in the galaxy of great poets like Dante and Shakespeare while the latter considers Pope to be "the great moral poet of all times, of all climes, of all stages of existence." Prof. Saintsbury points out that Pope's vivid expression and mastery of metre were simply superb and hence to deny poetry to Pope would be absurd.

Pope lived in an age when satire flourished and in this field, he found it possible to excel others by his perfect workmanship, mastery over his medium and genius for coining Proverbs. Pope was indeed "a poet whom it is easy to hate but easier to quote." This remark of Augustine Birrell bears ample testimony to the truth that his utterances found their permanent place in literature.

Of course, Pope did not have any definite philosophy of life. His *Essay on Man* was a failure. In this poem, even as Dr. Johnson points out, penury of knowledge and vulgarity of sentiment, were happily disguised. However, there were

occasional flashes of purest poetry when Pope was able to rise above the limitations of his age. *The Windsor Forest*, *The Elegy on an Unfortunate Lady*, and *Eloisa in Abelard* are exceptionally beautiful specimens of pure poetry. But in conclusion, we should say that though he may not rank with the greatest, it is ridiculous to deny him the title of a poet.

## IV

### POPE AS A SATIRIST

ALEXANDER POPE has a unique place among the satirist of the eighteenth century. Employing verse as the medium for his satire, he made it reach its highest heights, as Swift did choosing prose as his medium. The great difference in the origin of satire between Pope and Swift, is that in the case of the former, there is a good deal of personal rancour in the background while it is conspicuously absent in the case of the latter.

Satire seems to have eminently suited Pope's temperament. He was super-sensitive of his physical deformities and he could never forgive offences! Any attack on his person was particularly provocative enough to rouse his endless resentment which led him to stinging satire with deft blows right and left.

Of course, Pope claims a noble purpose in writing the slashing satire. He swears he was never urged by personal hatred. He did it only with a view to purge society of its pests! But, it is all right in theory and as an ideal. To do away with the caterpillars of literature is indeed a noble task. But Pope's claims remain only fantastic as even a superficial study of his poems shows how he has made this audacious claim while his personal animosities figure most prominently in his attacks.

We have the authority of Leslie Stephen who says that "There is something cruel in Pope's laughter, as in Swift's. The missiles are not mere filth, but are weighted hard materials that bruise and mangle." Stephen also adds: "He has ridiculed men for being obscure, poor and stupid,—faults not to be amended by satire, nor rightfully provocative of enmity." Pope hits against "the ruggedness and jinnerlessness of the sons of rhyme" and descends to contrast it with his own ease and dignity. This is his greatest sin—a sin that sullied his



poetry for ever. According to Stephen, "Pope knows in his better moments that a man is not necessarily wicked because he sleeps on a bulk or writes verses in a garret ; but he also knows that to mention those facts will give his enemies pain, and he cannot refrain from the use of so handy a weapon." And this is inexcusable, but Pope ruthlessly attacks all the poetasters who flock to him in need, and are only guilty of poverty and misery !

In *The Dunciad*, Pope is at his best. He pillories the characters of his enemies, with one couplet for each, and it is enough to damn him for his whole life. Sir Leslie Stephen remarks that "it (*The Dunciad*) is meant to be a boisterous guffaw from capacious lungs, an enormous explosion of superlative contempt for the most of stupid thick-skinned scribblers. They are to be overwhelmed with gigantic cackinnations, ducked in the dirtiest of drains, rolled over and over with rough horse-play, pelted with the least savoury of rotten eggs, not skilfully anatomised or pierced with dexterously directed needles."

Pope is described as a lynx-eyed satirist. No single detail of his enemies' weaknesses escapes. The painted child of dirt, the Earl Halifax helping to bury whom he helped to starve, James Moore's mother who was a whore, Bestia's illegal fortunes from Queen Anne—were all easily discovered and examined under Pope's microscopic eye and mercilessly anatomised ! In his *Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot*, Pope is regarded unmatched in 'the art of selecting his victims and marshalling their weak points.' For example, take the passage on Atticus. It contains a bitter sting and Addison's reputation is not spared any chance of survival. Pope represents him as one animated with petty literary jealousies, with an extremely unobliging nature, and one as "unwilling to wound but afraid to strike." Addison was Pope's one-time friend, but the latter charges him with lukewarm friendship and makes much of his jealousy.

"Should such a man, too fond to rule alone,  
Bear like the Turk, no brother near the throne."

The type of character as represented in Atticus is no doubt reprehensible, but the trouble is, it is not the real picture of Addison who was responsible for the fortunes of most of his

friends. As a matter of fact, Addison was one of the earliest to perceive Pope's genius and praise him with warmth and generosity. Though Pope charges Addison with jealousy, he is himself not free from it. Though he accuses Addison for hating 'arts that caused himself to rise', he is himself guilty of the same charge as it is equally applicable to him.

The Sporus passage is more bitter and less dignified. Hervey is lashed with a cat-of-the-nine right and left with deft blows, with words used alternately, like *a dung-fly, a silk-worm*; *the painted child of dirt*, a spaniel mumbling his prey but afraid to bite, and so on. In this passage, we find nothing but grossest abuse and vilest slander, without any restraint or grandeur. Pope makes physical weaknesses the subject of his attack and satirises misery and suffering. But strangely enough, Pope is himself super-sensitive when his own physical deformities are attacked! In fact, Hervey was in many respects an accomplished man of his time. As a brilliant Parliamentary orator, he won the appreciation of his opponents even. But, Pope does not spare him.

Then Pope directs his attack on Ambrose Philips. He charges him with pilfering, though he is himself guilty of such a thing to some extent. This is the trick of his trade! He charges him with alternating between sense and nonsense and finds fault with his poverty of expression, as he 'strains, from hard-bound brains, eight lines a year.'

Pope's satire has also the quality of dissimulation. He refers to the Dean and silver bell, with ridicule and denies its intention. He desires that his description should be regarded as purely imaginary. Pope's denial is a part of his technique. "To equivocate genteelly, as he termed it, or to deny firmly, as circumstances might require, were expedients he never hesitated to adapt. Imaginary details being generally worked in his pictures, he could always quibble and deny part with truth. Dr. Johnson's remarks are equally apt. He says: 'From the reproach, with an attack on a character so amiable, brought on him, he (Pope) tried all means of escaping. He was at last reduced to shelter his temefitv behind dissimulation. He wrote an exculpatory letter to the Duke (Chandos), which was answered with great magnanimity, as by a man who accepted his excuse without believing his professions.'"

In conclusion, Pope displays remarkable talent as a satirist. His epistle to Arbuthnot is described by some as not being a perverted piece of personal lampoon. But, as Dr. Johnson observes : "the satire which brought Theobald and Moore into contempt, dropped impotent from Bentley, like the javelin of Priam's." Sometimes, his very dunces become immortal, when his satire loses its effect. He might claim that no honest man need fear his satire ; but, in fact, all honest men feared his slash because it was false in general effect though true in details. But his form is perfect, his couplets are well-balanced, and his enemies are ruthlessly attacked. Therefore, though great as a satirist, Pope cannot be ranked among the greatest satirist of the world, on account of his malignity of nature. Leslie Stephen says : "Pope was governed by the instantaneous feeling. His emotion came in sudden jets and gushes, instead of a continuous stream. The same peculiarity deprives his poetry of continuous harmony or profound unity of conception. He corrects and prunes too closely. He could put things more briefly in verse than in prose ; one reason being that he could take liberties of this kind not permitted in prose writing. But the injury is compensated by the singular terseness and vivacity of the best style." In the words of the same critic, his satires consist of many "a perfectly turned phrase, an epigram which concentrated into a couplet, a volume of quick observations, a smart saying from Rochefoucauld or La Bruyere, which gave an edge to worldly wisdom ; a really brilliant utterance of one of those maxims, half true and not over-profound, but still presenting one aspect of life." For this, Pope is indeed admirable, and he has a unique place among the satirists of English language.

## V

### AN ACCOUNT OF DR. ARBUTHNOT

If there were a few more Arbuthnots in the world, Swift said he would burn his *Gulliver's Travels* ! This is a most significant remark which throws a flood of light on the character of Arbuthnot who was indeed an exemplary type of man. Dr. Johnson pays him a glowing tribute by describing him as "a man estimable for his learning, amiable for his life, and venerable for his piety."

He was born in Scotland in 1667, in the family of an episcopal clergyman. He was educated at Aberdeen and he took his degree in medicine, from St. Andrews, in 1696. After this, he went to London and set up practice there. Soon, he became popular for his skill in his profession. Fortunately for him, he was at Epsom when Prince George of Denmark suddenly fell ill. Dr. Arbuthnot gave a nice prescription and the Prince was cured.

This brought him fame and also promotion. He was appointed Physician Extraordinary to Queen Anne in 1705 and Physician-in-Ordinary in 1709. The Queen liked him very much and regarded him as her favourite physician. Therefore, he enjoyed great respect at the court also.

Pope was greatly indebted to Dr. Arbuthnot who attended on him frequently and prolonged Pope's life by dint of his professional skill and care. Pope makes a grateful acknowledgment of this fact that he was able to bear the burden of his long diseased life, owing to Arbuthnot's medical aid bestowed on him. Pope tells in a plain and unequivocal manner :

"To second, Arbuthnot ! Thy art and care,  
And teach the Being you preserv'd to bear."

Dr. Arbuthnot was a good friend. He was a favourite among the members of his circle. He was generous at heart, charming in manners, elegant in conversation, and therefore could easily win the love and goodwill of all the people he came into contact. No wonder, he was respected by all !

Swift, Pope and Gay were among the several of his admirers. Johnson's estimate of Dr. Arbuthnot is indeed superb. He says: "I think Dr. Arbuthnot is the first man among them (the eminent writers in Queen Anne's reign). He was the most universal genius, being an excellent physician, a man of deep learning, and a man of much humour."

In politics, Dr. Arbuthnot was a Tory. He was the author of several political pamphlets. In collaboration with Swift and Pope, he contributed to the *Memoirs of Martinus Scriblerus*. His *History of John Bull*, a satire against the Duke of Marlborough, is famous for fixing the modern conception of John Bull as the typical Englishman. Macaulay describes it as "the most ingenious and humorous political satire extant in our language." Being a Tory, like his friend Swift, he attacked the war policies of Whigs, in that book. His most well-known pamphlet is "The Art of Political Lying." It is said that he was instrumental in the formation of an Association called, the Scriblerus Club, with Swift, Pope, Gay and Parnell among its members, and that the outcome of that club was the brilliant pamphlet on the art of political lying. The chief aim of the Association was to satirise the abuses of human learning. But the satires under the title of *Memoirs of Martinus Scriblerus* were published only in 1741, i. e., six years after the death of Dr. Arbuthnot.

The last years of Arbuthnot were not very happy. After Queen Anne died, he was removed from his position of Physician-in-Ordinary, he shifted his quarters at St. James to an ordinary house in Dover Street. He wrote to Swift in 1714 thus: "My case is not half so deplorable as poor Lady Masham's and several of the Queen's servants, some of whom have no chance for bread, but the generosity of their present Majesty." Arbuthnot's concluding words in the Epistle written by Alexander Pope,

"Whether that blessing be deny'd or giv'n,  
Thus far was right, the rest belongs to Heav'n"

were indeed as Warburton points out, "very expressive of that religious resignation, which was the character both of Arbuthnot's temper and piety."

His words : "No Names—be calm—learn prudence of a friend" and "why, insult the poor and affront the great ?" reveal Arbuthnot's cautious and compassionate nature. Only once he bursts out in the Epistle and it is at the mention of Sporus. But even there, there is wisdom in his saying "Who breaks a butterfly upon a wheel ?" But all the rest is complimentary. And it is in the fitness of things, if Pope addressed his *Epistle* to Dr. Arbuthnot and immortalised his name thereby.

## VI

### EVOLUTION OF THOUGHT IN THE EPISTLE

ALEXANDER POPE begins his Epistle with an instruction to his servant John Searb to shut the door and tie up the knocker, with a view to refuse admittance to all the poetasters. He says they have been harassing him at all hours without sparing him on Sundays and even at the Church or dinner time. Pope regards them as lunatics let loose.

Pope explains how the blame is thrown on him for the ills of others. If a person like James Moore is guilty of violation of moral or religious laws, or if a frenzied wife like Lady Walpole elopes with some one, Pope, his poetry and wit are held responsible. Among the harassing visitors, a parson addicted to drinking, a maudlin poetess, a clerk who takes to poetry instead of his legal writings, and a desperate poet prepared to write on walls with charcoal, etc., are to be found. Vexed with these poetasters, Pope requests Dr. Arbuthnot if he can prescribe a medicine to be rid of that plague. He feels he has been in a fix. If he displeases them, they write scandals against him. If he commends them, they press him to listen to their compositions, though with aching head. If he advises them to keep their compositions for nine years, they ask him to correct them. They crave for his friendship, a Prologue and finally a loan of ten pounds. Pitholeon (be it Wilsted or Cooke) approaches him with a request to win the patronage of the Duke, but if it is denied, he will write scandals against Pope. Or in the end when all his attempts fail, he may be prepared to turn a parson ! Barford sends his tragedy, "The Virgin Queen", and asks for Pope's recommendation to the manager of some theatre. But when the play fails, the playwright persuades Pope to influence Lintot to publish it, after making some corrections, if necessary, and even shamelessly proposes to give Pope a share in the proceeds thereon.

Arbuthnot sounds a note of caution and asks Pope not to name Queens, Ministers and Kings. But Pope continues his analogy of King Midas and threatens to publish the secret of the poetasters and their foolishness, because only then he can have sound sleep. Further, Pope tells his friend that the inept or thick-skinned poetaster does not have any sense of shame as he is like a spider always busy with its feeble production. However, he argues that he has not hurt any poetaster—Colley Cibber, or Henley or James Moore—because Bavius still enjoys hospitality at one table and Philips still wins the praise of a bishop for his wit. Arbuthnot's exhortation for prudence is of no avail, because Pope dislikes flatterers more than open enemies. Then he refers to his flatterers, who praised his nose or stooping shoulder, or ridiculous comparisons with Ovid or Virgil.

Pope now explains why he has undertaken writing poetry. He says it came to him naturally even while as a child, and his parents encouraged him in the art. It has helped him to bear the burden of life. He has published his poems because Granville, Walsh, Congreve, Swift, Talbot, Somers, Sheffield, Rochester and Bolingbroke gave him encouragement and inspiration. When he has won the appreciation of such eminent men of letters, he need not be bothered at the opinion of Burnets, Oldmixons and Cookes.

His earlier literary compositions have been merely descriptive and lacking in substance. But Gildon and Dennis publish their attacks. Pope says he has ignored them as he did not like to measure strength with such scribblers. He further says he has simply smiled at their criticism—from Bentley's to Theobald's—which is based on mere grammar, spelling and scansion. However, he admits he has given his critics their due when they raged against him. For example, Pope has attacked Ambrose Philips, a hack-translator of Persian Tales, a plagiarist, and a writer of an admixture of sense and nonsense. As a consequence, these petty critics feel as though Addison even is not safe from his attacks. The reference to Addison gives rise to Pope's further outburst. He calls Addison a born poet and true genius, but a coward with a mean jealousy for others' rise. He has a great desire to rule alone. He is "willing to wound but afraid to strike."

Then Pope indulges in self-praise and desires no appreciation from the flattering poetasters. He would like to keep himself



severely alone from them and leave them to Lord Halifax who sits like Apollo on Mt. Parnassus, and rewards them with dinner or wine or even in kind. Pope is happy in getting rid of them. He is also happy he has the company of Gay left to him, while the rest flock to Halifax.

Pope now asks his tormentors to allow him to lead his own life. He wants neither to be a patron nor to have a patron. His aim is to pay off his debts, if any, and say his prayers regularly, and live a peaceful life and die a peaceful death.

Pope denies all rumours that emanate (about his next publications) when he is seen closeted with Swift. Still, Sir William Yonge indulges in his virulent satires against Pope and some vain poets imitate his style. So, he curses all the poetasters, if by their verse, they cause pain to a worthy person, or an innocent girl. He says that no honest person need be afraid of his attacks. However, he is all anger for Lord Hervey whom he calls by several ugly names. Pope ridicules Hervey's crafty and cunning nature, false sense of pride, and meanness in descending to low levels.

Pope feels happy that he has not bartered his self-respect to Fortune or Fashion and that he has proudly learnt to consider it a shame to fawn even upon kings and flatter them. It is his proud privilege, he maintains, to withstand the attacks of his antagonists, coward friends, half-approving wits, and conceited critics, only to serve Virtue. He is therefore fully prepared to suffer all ills, in the name of Virtue. He cannot excuse a fool whatever his social status be. He has learnt the principle of forbearance and reticence from his father. His mother is an example of high nobility and she has never scandalised the reputation of a married woman. Thus, both of them have spotless characters, and hopes to make their names immortal by his powerful poetry.

Pope says that his parents have descended from noble families whose ancestors contributed a great deal to the honour of England. His parents have to their credit, happiness, harmony, dignity and peace in their domestic life. Strangers to religious discords or ill-gotten gains, their names redound to the credit of honour. Pope's father has never been to a court and he knows only the language of sincerity and truthfulness. He has

enjoyed a long and disease-free life and Pope wishes to have a similar life.

In conclusion, Pope prays for Arbuthnot's long and prosperous life and expresses his tender desire to be able to serve his old mother patiently and sincerely, catering to her comforts. The epistle closes with a reply from Arbuthnot who expresses his spirit of religious resignation.

## VII

### THE ATTICUS PASSAGE

Lines 193-214 in *The Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot* form what we call the Atticus passage. They appeared first in a Miscellany in 1723 but were later re-printed in 1727 after much alteration. Finally, they appeared in the Epistle in the present form in 1935 and it is declared to be the most famous passage in it. Commenting on this passage Mark Pattison says: "These celebrated lines are at once a master-piece of Pope's skill as a poet, and his base disposition as a man. They unite the most exquisite finish of sarcastic expression with the venomous malignity of personal rancour. They have less of antithesis and epigram than the character of Warton or the Duchess of Marlborough, and therefore more reality. Pope felt every stab, and gratified his temper by the pain he inflicted. The lines were not published till Addison had been dead eight years. They appeared first as a fragment in the Miscellanies of 1727, but they were finished as early as 1716, when according to Spence, they had been sent by Pope to Addison himself. Pope had meditated each point for years, as the germs of some of them appear in a prose letter to Craggs in 1715. In the first copy of 1717, the name was given—Addison. The substitution of Atticus may perhaps be an indication that Pope was not without some sense of outrage he was committing. The supposed provocation was a project for a rival—Whig—translation of Homer, the suggestion of which Pope attributed to Addison."

The original of this character, Atticus, was a wealthy Roman and friend of Cicero. He was the most elegant and finished scholar of Rome. Alexander Pope calls Joseph Addison "the English Atticus in a keen but biting satire on the personal characteristics of the famous essayist." Elvin and Courthope say that the name Atticus had already been appropriated to Addison, in the *Spectator*, No. 150.

The Atticus Passage begins with the warmest praise and the most generous appreciation for Addison

"Whose fires  
True genius kindles, and fair Fame inspires ;  
Blest with each talent and each art to please,  
And born to write, converse, and live with ease."

But soon, Pope turns his gear and charges Atticus for his excessive fondness for enjoying exclusive rights and privileges without any toleration for a rival poet, quite characteristic of a Turkish Sultan who cannot bear a near relative for fear of intrigues. Pope charges Addison for his hatred "for arts that caused himself to rise", for his cold, calculated and scanty praise, for his approval of a rival's poetic effort with a sly side-long look, for his uncanny knack in teaching others to sneer without himself sneering, for his willingness to wound but fear to strike in an open manner, for his sly hints of others' faults, for his shyness to declare his dislike in a manly and open way, for his caution in neither blaming or commending, for his suspicious nature, for his fear of even unworthy fellows, for his love of flattery and for his pretensions to be obliging, though he never obliged. According to Pope, Atticus presides over the circle of his friends :

"Like Cato, give his little Senate Laws,  
And sit attentive to his own applause."

Finally, Pope concludes his Atticus passage with the questions :

"Who must laugh, if such a man there be ?  
Who would not weep, if Atticus were he ?"

meaning that every one will weep when he is told that the person with the above description, is no other than Addison !

This is indeed a superb attack. It has no parallel as a satiric portraiture. The superior excellence of Atticus, is no doubt duly recognized. But, the question is whether all the traits of Atticus are really applicable to Addison. No doubt, even minute details are worked out with utmost precision, but unfortunately, the picture has a general falsity of effect. Addison was one of the earliest to recognise Pope's genius and encourage him in his poetic efforts with utmost warmth and generosity. Pope is suspicious to the core. If Addison prefers Ambrose Philip's *Pastorals* to those of Pope, it is a matter of judgment.

But Pope finds a sinister motive in it ! Again if Addison advises him not to introduce the machinery of the Sylphs in his *Rape of the Lock*, Pope attributes it to jealousy. Here again, it is a point of personal preference ! Finally, if Addison has remarked : "Pope's translation (of Homer) was good, but that Tickells' was the best in the English language," Pope attributes a motive and thinks that Addison himself must have been the author of the version attributed to Tickell. All this is unfounded and based on suspicion. Whatever it be, Pope tells us of a letter he has written to Addison, appending some lines of verse, charging him with jealousy and adds that it has opened Addison's eyes and taught him to use him (Pope) more civilly. But Pope is not content with this. He revises the verses, publishes them in the *Miscellanies* and finally includes in the *Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot*.

The type of character as represented in Atticus, is, no doubt, reprehensible. But the trouble is, it is not the real picture of Addison who has been definitely responsible for the fortunes of most of his friends. Though Pope charges Addison with jealousy, he is himself not free from it. The charge that Addison hates "arts that caused him to rise" is equally applicable to Pope. But the Atticus passage is more dignified and full of restraint when compared with the Sporus passage.

According to Professor Tillotson, "hatred as an inspiration for Pope's satire has been overstated in importance. The emotion of pity is often as powerfully at work," as the line "who would not weep, if Atticus were he ?"

## VIII

### THE SPORUS PASSAGE

In the lines 193 to 214 of the *Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot*, Atticus is the person attacked and therefore it is called the Atticus Passage. Similarly, in the lines 305-333 Sporus is the person attacked and is hence called the Sporus Passage. Here, Sporus is the veiled name for Lord Hervey. According to Dr. Johnson, this is the meanest passage in the *Epistle*. It is indeed sharp and piercing and full of grossest abuse and vilest slander. With no restraint, no dignity, no grandeur, Pope is brutal and malicious in his attack and his picture "misses its mark" and errs on the side of exaggeration. One feels that the picture is essentially unreal and that it is the outcome of personal rancour, without any tinge of truth in it.

The original of this character, Sporus, is a slave under Nero, and Pope's adoption of the name for Lord Hervey is simply out of spite and ill-will and deliberate intention to insult. But, Lord Hervey is in several respects the most accomplished man of his time. A supple politician and good Parliamentary orator, a Whig leader and favourite at Court, and an important officer, holding key-posts like Vice-Chamberlain and Lord Privy Seal, he has at once won an easy popularity in his own day. Further, Hervey has shown himself to be a talented person by his book, *Memoirs of George II.* He is also the fortunate husband of Mary Lepell whom Pope himself has greatly admired. But, Pope calls him "Lord Fanny" for his effeminacy and marks out his weaknesses for his attack. Hervey's genius for flattery is exposed. Even his feeble health and ugliness of face are not spared.

Pope hates Hervey very much. It may be due to want of principle or public honour in the latter's character. But the reason for Pope's hatred or any quarrel between him and the Lord remains obscure. Pope attacks him for the first time in the *Miscellanies* (1727) and renews it, (1733). But irritated with Hervey's retort in his verses to "The Imitator of Horace".

Pope pays him back in a prose letter and finally presents him as Sporus in the *Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot*.

In line No. 305, Pope starts his attack saying "Let Sporus tremble" from fear by his cruel satire against him and makes Arbuthnot refer to him as a man in gaudy silk dress and living on the diet of ass's milk and with no feelings of sense or satire and hence unworthy of Pope's poetic efforts. Yet Pope desires to attack him and calls him an ill-smelling and blood-sucking bug with golden wings—golden because Hervey is a favourite at the Court, and bug because he is insignificant and mean, blood-sucking and ill-smelling. Then he calls him "painted child of dirt", because Hervey is a profligate and applies a rouge to his ugliness. Pope continues the metaphor and describes the insect to stink and sting *i.e.*, to emit bad odour and cause pain by its pricks. While in flight, *i.e.*, while Hervey flies with his slander, he offends wits and fair women. Then Pope indirectly calls Hervey a well-trained spaniel which holds its prey in the mouth, without biting it, but taking pleasure only in mumbling it. Then Pope describes his flowery Speeches in the Parliament as ineffective as they cater to the tunes of the Prime Minister, just as a puppet squeaks to the breaths of a prompter. Pope then proceeds to compare Hervey with Satan and Eve with the Queen Caroline and describes how Hervey used to sit close behind the ears of the Queen in her hunting chaise and pour into her ears words of temptation. What Satan (the toad) spits or excretes, is half-froth and half-venom. So, according to Pope, what Hervey tells Queen Caroline is nothing but the worthless and poisonous excretions of the toad. Hervey's whisperings in her ears are full of indecent things, puns, politics, scandalous stories, idle and vulgar gossip, mean versés or impious talks. Further, Hervey's intelligence alternates between the high and the low and displays a strange mixture of the two sexes. In short, he is the very embodiment of a worthless Antithesis, a figure of speech employed to balance two contradictory ideas. Pope contemptuously calls him even an amphibious thing, because when Hervey is emotional, he is said to be living on land, and when he is crafty, he is described to be living on water. Then Pope calls him a "Fop at the toilet" because he is a dandy at the dressing table, and "a f'rtterer at the board" because he is sycophant at the council board. Again Pope ridicules Hervey for his gait, a physical deformity, because he moves on occasion with short light steps like a lady and on another occasion he

walks in an afflicted manner like a lord. Further, his features shock the beholders, being handsome outwardly due to toilet, but repulsive on a close scrutiny. He has such talents that nobody trusts and wit that can stoop to any mean level. His assertions are always proud, but his behaviour is always abject. He "licks the dust." And this is Pope's final blow summing up the characteristics of the whole man !

Thus the Sporus passage is full of direct, base and desperate attack on Lord Hervey. Hervey's character may have been so despicable as to inspire an outburst from an amiable gentleman like Arbuthnot. But, it is Pope who has put the outburst in Arbuthnot's mouth, at the mention of Sporus. Even otherwise, the attack has exceeded all limits of decency and propriety. No one can deny that if such a man exists, he is the proper object for satire. But, bold and biting, daring and direct, piercing and painful as Pope's attack is, one is tempted to believe that he is only exaggerating and giving us an unreal picture. There is no doubt, that Pope has made much of Hervey's weaknesses. And we know his good points—his brilliance in his orations, his sense of humour and his felicity of expression either in prose or verse. Pope ignores them and paints him in the blackest colours inspired by personal rancour.



## IX

### ATTICUS AND SPORUS PASSAGES

#### (A STUDY IN CONTRAST)

The Atticus Passage (Lines 193-214) and the Sporus Passage (Lines 305-333) in *The Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot* are the most important satirical passages written against two prominent men of Pope's time. Atticus is Addison and Sporus is Lord Hervey. Both the passages are vituperative, but are indeed brilliant literary satires though with unfair attacks on Pope's opponents. However they radically differ in kind and also in content.

The Atticus Passage shows a certain degree of restraint and grandeur while the Sporus Passage reveals Pope at his worst with his weapons of grossest abuse and vilest slander. According to Mark Pattison, Pope's lines on Atticus "unite the most exquisite finish of sarcastic expression with the venomous malignity of personal rancour." He argues that Pope's substitution of the name Atticus may perhaps be an indication that Pope was not without some sense of outrage he was committing. But this feeling of restraint is not to be traced in the Sporus Passage, because it is an unfair attack made beyond all limits of propriety, decency or decorum. It is not only highly poisonous but also most repulsive and pugnacious. That is why this passage is regarded as the meanest in the *Epistle*, by eminent critics like Johnson, while the other is appreciated by Pattison, Chesterton and others for its moderation. Thus the essential difference in these two passages is one of tone and intention. In the Atticus Passage, Pope sings his praises before he lashes, but in the latter, Pope launches his direct and instantaneous attack and continues giving deft blows right and left, maliciously, ruthlessly and even hysterically.

Professor Tillotson finds the emotion of pity at work in the Atticus passage and quotes Pope's words, "Who would not weep if Atticus were he?" G. K. Chesterton is also of the view :

"It is penetrated with sorrow and a kind of reverence, and it is addressed directly to a man. This is no mock tournament to gain the applause of the crowd. It is a deadly duel by the lonely seashore." But the Sporus passage is downright in its condemnation, holding nothing sacred for him and sparing nothing from scurrilous attack, nay not even the physical weaknesses. Curiously enough, Pope forgets his own reactions at such attacks made against his own person. May be, as Professor Tillotson says, "Hatred as an inspiration for Pope's satire has been overstated." But the portrait of Sporus is indeed the outcome of an extreme degree of hatred and hence is an exaggerated one. But Professor Tillotson, far from being furious, praises this passage. He says: "When one reads the character of Sporus, one's eyes are not on Hervey. It is as much as they can do to receive the fire of words. Hervey's character is for Pope an entrance into a brilliantly sensuous world every atom of which is vital, a world as exciting to the aesthetic sense as those of the *Nun's Priest's Tale* or of *Lamia*." And this is a singular exception to the general estimate of the passage.

The reasons, if any, that led to the composition of these passages must find a place here. Pope is, no doubt, very quarrelsome by nature. He quarrelled with many of his contemporaries, Dennis, Wycherley, Lady Mary and a host of others. So, in general, nobody is safe from his biting pen, no, not even Addison! Pope's attacks on Addison and Hervey earned him permanent fame or notoriety, whatever it be. Pope has his own reasons to suspect the *bona fides* of Addison. Pope misunderstands him when the latter prefers Philip's pastorals to his own. He again mistakes Addison's advice regarding the introduction of sylphs in his *Rape of the Lock*. Finally he finds fault with Addison for his lavish praise for Tickell's translation of Homer to the detriment of his own translation. So, he is provoked, as we may say, and he attributes jealousy to Addison and calls him a Turk or Cato or an untrustworthy friend or a timorous foe and so on. But there seems to be no evidence of any apparent quarrel between Pope and Lord Hervey. If the Sporus passage is simply an outburst "of righteous indignation, it is well and good. But if it is so malicious, so direct and so indecent, it cannot gain the approval of public opinion. It is the meanest type of personal lampoon. With every breath it acquires greater fire and with every emotion, it increases its

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venomous range. It becomes even unworthy of the writer. Cursed be Sporus, if he really exists, but poor Hervey has his noble accomplishments and he is certainly not a child of dirt and no golden bug though in silk suits.

Summing up, we have to say that Pope's Atticus has a tinge of reality about him, because of the poet's restraint, while Sporus seems to be exaggerated or unrealistic on account of the poet's excessive vehemence. Secondly, the satire against Addison is not so direct as that against Hervey. There is some decency in the Atticus passage while the Sporus passage smacks grossness and vulgarity. The former achieves its purpose to some extent, while the latter misses its mark and even becomes unworthy of the writer himself.

## X

### MEN OF LETTERS IN POPE'S AGE

Apart from its satirical value, *The Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot* is an interesting document which throws a flood of light on men of letters and conditions of their life, in the Age of Pope. Almost all features of the profession of literary men are brought out in this Epistle. In a way, Pope's Epistle is a mirror of the lives of literary men of that period. Hence, it has attained great significance in the history of English literature.

The profession of men of letters was considerably degenerated in this Age. It fell from its pedestal and rhymed verses and pamphlet-writing became the order of the day. Generally the members of this noble profession are poor. But they, of Pope's Age were poorer still. They could print their poems only by raising subscriptions or by winning the patronage of a nobleman or statesman. Necessarily the literary men turned themselves into hack-writers to eke out their livelihood. This deplorable condition gave rise to a number of scribblers or poetasters who catered to the tastes of unscrupulous politicians or men in power. In other words, these writers became mere tools to serve private vengeance. And this resulted in lampoon-writing and much libellous literature.

The party men naturally exploited the situation and brought the literature of hatred and scandal into utmost prominence. The lot of the writer was miserable in his quest for a patron, while the lot of the patron was equally miserable because he was frequently pestered with hack-writers. In this great scramble between the poets and the patrons, the author of merit many a time missed his recognition. Most often those poor authors were obliged to flatter the worthy and even dedicate their works to them. Some of them went from door to door with a subscription list! Sometimes, they received monetary help, sometimes they had only empty promises and sometimes they had to be satisfied with a drink or dinner!

Further they lived in the wretched garrets of the Grub Street or hid their heads in the Mint and put up with the unwholesome blasts of the West wind and wrote to cater to the tastes of a patron, "obliged by hunger and request of friends." They were always in need of a patron or a place. If their request was not granted, they wrote satires in Journals and published scandals. And this is indeed a telling commentary on their profession in those days. Poor authors, they were always in debts and were confined to their garrets except on Sundays when they dared to move out and harass the more well-to-do members of their profession. It is against the harassment of poetasters, Pope refers to in the beginning of the Epistle.

There were many petty jealousies and quarrels among the men of letters in that age. Even the most distinguished authors were not above them. Toleration and goodwill for a rival-poet was seldom noticed in that age. Addison was accused of jealousy. If others adopted the same means for promotion in life, it was not tolerated. But Pope was also guilty of the same charge. He prospered on account of raising subscriptions for his *Homer*, but he condemned the practice in others.

Suspicion and distrust were rampant among the men of this profession in Pope's Age. This was the reason why there were so many quarrels. The moment jealousy was attributed and plagiarism suspected, the poets quarrelled and indulged in lampoon-writing. The result was that it became almost a fashion to attack others, to hit them below their belt! And satire flourished! Libelling rivals (whether they deserved it or not), spreading scandals, black-mailing virtuous women and causing pain to upright men had stepped into this profession and spoiled its fair name. In the advertisement to this Epistle, Pope refers to the joint attack made against him by Hervey and Lady Mary Wortley Montague. In the Epistle itself, he attacked Addison, Hervey and a host of others. This shows how authors quarrelled among themselves and wrote against one another, be it true or false. And it was the spirit of the Age.

Bufo is a common type of the patron of the period. He was fond of getting name and fame, and he encouraged all kinds of authors. He was "fed on soft dedication all day long." Further he pretended to be a critic though his judgment was

next to nothing. He deserved severe satire and Pope was perfectly justified in ridiculing this type of vainglorious patrons who flourished in plenty in his Age.

There were some good critics, no doubt, in this period. But Pope depicts them as shallow in general. Bentley and Theobald, according to Pope, were merely inserters of punctuation marks, with a meagre talent for interpretation. This judgment is indeed biased, but we may apply it to others who lived in that age and became popular on account of that type of criticism, abounding in scansion, emendations, etc.

In conclusion, we have to admit that the Epistle is indeed an interesting document of the time revealing the conditions of men of letters, but we cannot whole-heartedly endorse the picture given, as it is not free from prejudice and personal jealousy.

# XI

## CHARACTER OF ALEXANDER POPE

**APOLOGIA PRO VITA SUA** is a famous autobiographical treatise in which Cardinal Newman defends his conversion from the Anglican to the Roman Catholic Church. We can apply this name to Pope's *Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot* as the latter aims at an explanation or a vindication of offensive satire with defensive arguments. And we have the authority of Leslie Stephen in the application of this name to Pope's *Epistle*. David Daiches is also of the opinion that it is Pope's formal *Apologia* as a satirist. Of course Pope explains in it that he is fundamentally a man of peace, but has been "goaded into satire by the intolerable behaviour of fools and knaves." It is a fact that Pope has been severely attacked since the publication of the first volume of his *Iliad* and that he has kept quiet for a pretty long time. Daiches adds: "Nevertheless his pose as the contented peace-loving poet besieged on all sides by flatterers, poetasters wanting his approval or his assistance, dramatists urging him to write prologues for their plays, writers of all kinds asking for introductions to publishers or noble patrons, is deliberately heightened in its presentation of the author as above the literary battle of his day and only drawn in by force." This picture has some truth in it and is the beginning of Pope's *Apologia* as a satirist. No doubt, "He enjoyed fame, and he enjoyed complaining of the irritations and interruptions which it brought him. Every maudlin poetess or rhyming peer, he exclaims, flew to Twitnam for his advice or commendation."

In the *Epistle*, Pope is careful to show himself at his best. This picture really shows what Pope wants others to see in him, though not what he really has in him. Giving a margin for exaggeration, we have to admit that the *Epistle* enables us to understand the career and character of Alexander Pope. It may

be, Pope has overshot the mark, but the poem is indeed of great autobiographical value.

Pope tells us that he is a great lover of poetry and that even as a child, he has begun lispings in numbers. This is correct and even his father's encouragement has been there. There is, no doubt, that Pope has found consolation and comfort in poetry alone, to bear the brunt of life—the long disease of life, as he puts it. He is fortunate in winning the appreciation and encouragement of eminent men like Walsh, Lansdowne and Swift, which led him to his rapid reputation. But it has not turned his head, he continues, and he feels like a pensive philosopher that the present and the future have lost their charm for him. This may also be true because of his melancholy physical existence.

Pope reveals himself to be self-laudatory on occasions. He says he is above ambition, greed, fashion and servility :

“Not Fortune's worshipper, not Fashion's fool,  
Nor Lucre's madman, nor Ambition's tool,  
Nor proud, nor servile.”

Pope's life's history shows that he is indeed not above board. Further, Pope asserts his “manly ways” though his behaviour and attitude towards Philips and Hervey give the lie to his assertions. We again find Pope blowing his own trumpet “That flattery, even to Kings he held a shame.” We cannot accept this statement without a grain of salt, because he has flattered Bolingbroke, Walsh, Garth, Congreve and Arbuthnot, whatever his friendship with them be. Well, Pope says he hates lies and propounds the theory that a lie either in verse or in prose, is the same. But, the story of the publication of his literary correspondence, gives the lie to his own theory, because it has been much altered, rewritten and retouched, so as to cater to the tastes of his readers and serve the needs of the occasion.

Pope tells us he can sleep soundly without being disturbed by any poetic thoughts in his head. This is nothing short of intellectual hypocrisy. We have indeed authoritative information to show how on several wintry nights he used to ring or summon his maid to bring him his writing materials, to note down, may be, brilliant thoughts, lest they should fly. We cannot deny the fact that he has been exercised in mind



considerably with those poetic conceptions and consequently suffered from sleeplessness. And the readers, cannot, no doubt, swallow the statement easily. Again, when Pope tells us about his supreme indifference for Dennis, whether he is alive or dead, we are inclined to doubt his *bona fides* because we know his super-sensitiveness. He has never spared any, nay, not even the impotent and insignificant foe ! As Selincourt observes : "that he was a liar and an egomaniac is not possible to deny." Again, it cannot be *humbleness* if he has drunk with Cibber or knocked at Theobald's door ; it may be due to other reasons as well.

But Pope's character has its nobler traits, as revealed in this Epistle. He is a good friend and he acknowledges his gratitude to his benefactors. He is all warmth and affection to Swift, Gay, Walsh, Granville, Rochester, Bolingbroke and Arbuthnot. He displays himself to be a true friend to all of them and ever faithful to their loyalties. In particular, he is deeply beholden to Arbuthnot to whom he addresses this Epistle and expresses his profound gratitude to him as the saviour of his life.

Pope is a dutiful son. His love for his parents knows no bounds. He depicts their characters as unimpeachable and impeccable and this love is natural in any worthy son. The tender and the eager expression of his desire to "rock the cradle of reposing Age" and to "extend a Mother's breath with lenient arts", fills our minds with admiration and makes us forget, though for a moment, his weaknesses. Leslie Stephen commenting on Pope's lines says : "If there are more tender and exquisitely expressed lines in the language, I do not know where to find them ; and yet again I should be glad not to be reminded by a cruel commentator that Mrs. Pope had been dead for two years when they were published, and that even this touching effusion has therefore a taint of dramatic affectation". Mark Pattison also remarks that "the pathetic sweetness of these lines is not surpassed by anything else which Pope has written."

Thus, this Epistle explains his stand as a satirist, gives out his reasons for writing at all, reveals his temper and attitude to his enemies and finally establishes his character as a true friend and dutiful son. In a way, the Epistle sums up his career down from the time he began to lisp in numbers to the ripe old age of his

mother when he is all eagerness to serve her with 'lenient arts'. So, it may be called Pope's *Apologia Pro Vita Sua*. In conclusion, we join hands with the learned Selincourt in saying : "One goes to him (Pope) for pleasure of a very different quality : What one looks for in Pope, is *wit*, that seasoned, salty world-wisdom of the adult educated man, who has acquired it by his intercourse with an enlightened society, and has learned to communicate it with point, precision and polish : *What oft was thought, but ne'er so well expressed.*"

## XII

### THE EPISTLE AS A STRANGE MIXTURE OF HONESTY AND HYPOCRISY

Leslie Stephen remarks that in the *Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot*, "there is a strange mixture of honesty and hypocrisy". Honesty (or truthfulness) and hypocrisy (or simulation of goodness) seldom go together. If they are both mixed up by any poet, it is a strange feat indeed ! And it is said to the credit or discredit of Pope to have blended honesty and hypocrisy in such a dexterous way that surprises us most, almost unawares. Sometimes, it is even difficult to believe in the honesty of Pope because in the words of Prof. Selincourt, he constantly antedated his early poems in order to give an impression of youthful precocity, put it about, quite falsely, that his father belonged to the family of the Earls of Downe, and systematically falsified his letters before publishing them in order to obscure incidents in his past of which he had come to be ashamed."

Nevertheless, there are occasions which bespeak of an honesty and are worthy of commendation. Fundamentally, he is a laureate of peace and a lover of poetry from childhood, but "goaded into satire" by the intolerable behaviour of the poetasters. This is partly true and partly false. Selincourt remarks : "On the contrary, the struggle for patronage, inflamed by political rivalries, led to quarrels and personal abuse of an absurd and indecent malignancy, which might to us seem comic; were it not for its darker and more tragic side. Of such abuse Pope was both perpetrator and victim in a pre-eminent degree—and it is not the pleasantest aspect of his life's story." But he puts on an admirable pose "as the contented peace-loving poet (besieged on all sides by flatterers, poetasters wanting his approval or his assistance, dramatists urging him to write prologues for their plays, writers of all kinds asking for introductions to publishers or noble patrons) is deliberately heightened in its presentation of the

author as above the literary battle of the day and only drawn in by force." It is a fact that a number of poetasters sought his assistance ; it is also a truth that he wrote prologues to plays ; it is also true that some authors asked him for introductions to publishers and patrons ; but it is not a fact that Pope kept himself above the literary battle of the day and that he has been drawn in only by force. And this pose is only a kind of dissimulation for virtue or goodness.

Pope tells us that even as a child he lisped in numbers and that his father has approved of his choice of this profession. This is, no doubt, an honest and truthful account. Pope also speaks of eminent men of letters like Granville, Walsh, Garth, Congreve, Swift, Talbot, Somers, Sheffield, Rochester and St. John and says :

"From these the world will judge on men and books,  
Not from the Burnetts, Oldmixons and Cooks."

This also is a sincere account and an honest opinion too ! There is not even a trace of pretence in his professions of love and affection and also appreciation for those friends of his, whose eminence and scholarship were well-established facts.

Pope tells in the Epistle that he neither likes flattery nor flattering others. He expresses his dislike for flatterers more than for his open enemies and refers to the absurd praises bestowed on him for his nose, for his stoop, etc., and for the ridiculous comparisons made with Alexander, Ovid and Virgil. This is indeed an honest indignation. Then it is said he hates flattering, even if he be a king. Rather, he considers it a shame ! This does not seem to have been said in utmost sincerity and a feeling of whole-hearted conviction. Though he says that he does not like praise from the scribblers but keeps himself like Asian rulers aloof from flatterers, we cannot believe in the veracity of his statement. Pope who is super-sensitive to the references made of him by others, and who himself indulges in self-praise (even in this Epistle) cannot but be amenable to flattery !

Pope's love, devotion and admiration for his parents, is indeed unique. These tender lines have won the appreciation of eminent critics like, Mark, Pattison, Dr. Johnson, G.K. Chesterton, Prof. Selincourt, Leslie Stephen and a host of others. But even in these lines, a cruel commentator, (accord-

ing to Leslie Stephen) points out that Pope's mother died two years before the publication, meaning that it is Pope's afterthought.

On a number of occasions, Pope professed virtue or goodness. We can easily understand they are only pretences or dissimulations. He says he is averse to telling lies by pointing out that lie in verse or prose is the same. He says that unlike others, he enjoys sound sleep without being disturbed by poetic ideas. He again says he has descended from the family of the Earls of Downe. He also says that he has not sought the patronage of any. He finds fault with poets raising subscriptions. He glories himself in the pride "that if he pleased, he pleased by manly ways". Why, he pretends a hundred things which are not indeed true. He is himself guilty of the same charges, to some extent or other, which he levels against others. And this is nothing short of hypocrisy.

Referring to his passages on Addison and Hervey, Selincourt points out: "The portrait of Hervey (whom Pope calls *Sporus*) is less admirable: it is outrageous and disgusting, but exceedingly clever. In the portrait of Addison there is both truth and restraint: in that of Hervey there is neither. It is a scream of rage and revenge, controlled only by the knowledge of where to hit in order to give most pain." And this attitude on the part of Alexander Pope is indeed the outcome of hypocrisy.

Referring to his description of Timon's Villa in the fourth Moral Essay, and Pope's original intention of it to be canorous, the costly mansion of Duke of Chandos, and his present intention to regard the description as purely imaginary, Mr. Carruthers writes: "To equivocate genteelly, as he termed it, or to deny firmly, as circumstances might require, were expedients he (Pope) never hesitated to adopt. Imaginary details being generally worked in his pictures, he could always quibble and deny part with truth." We are sure that this kind of equivocation or quibbling is indeed the outcome of not honesty but hypocrisy. We have also the authority of Dr. Johnson who remarks: "From the reproach, with an attack on a character so amiable, brought on him, he (Pope) tried all means of escaping. He was at last reduced to shelter his tomerity behind dissimulation. He wrote an exculpatory letter to the Duke, which was

answered with great magnanimity, as by a man who accepted his excuse without believing his professions."

In conclusion, we have to say that Pope's *Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot* "is a strange mixture of honesty and hypocrisy" of which the element of hypocrisy predominates.

## XIII

### SIR A. W. WARD VIS-A-VIS EPISTLE

*"The Epistle, singularly perfect and rounded in form, is not withstanding its fragmentary origin, of the highest interest from an ethical as well as literary point of view."* DISCUSS.

This remark of Sir A. W. Ward about the *Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot* deserves careful study. According to him the epistle is singular or remarkable from rarity and much beyond the average in degree. Then, it is perfect or complete, thoroughly trained or skilled, exact and precise. It is rounded in form in the sense that it brings to symmetrical or well-ordered shape. It contains detached pieces or isolated bits, originally written in the form of fragments. But, the poem on the whole is of great interest both from the ethical (treating of moral questions or rules of conduct) and the literary (as a work of art whose value lies in beauty of form or emotional effect) points of view.

The Epistle contains a number of fragments, separate bits of ideas without much continuity or sequence. They can be broadly described as—(1) Pope's refusal to give admittance to poetasters, (2) his strange dilemma in giving them their due, (3) his diatribes against Pytholeon, Barford, Bentley, Theobald, Ambrose Philips, Addison, Halifax and Hervey, etc., (4) his occasional outbursts of self-praise and self-pity, and (5) his love and devotion to his parents. These are all fragments which Pope combines or blends into a harmonious whole in the form of the epistle. Dr. Johnson rightly remarks: "*The Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot*, now arbitrarily called the *Prologue to the Satires* is a performance consisting, as it seems, of many fragments wrought into one design, which by this union of scattered beauties contains more striking paragraphs than could probably have been brought together into an occasional work."

Pope's epistle is highly interesting from the ethical point of view. It stipulates, in the first instance, a code of moral behaviour or right conduct on the part of poetasters and flatterers, trying to win patronage and earn livelihood by their unscrupulous writings. If the poetasters forget their sense of decency and proportion and begin to pester poets like Pope, at all times and in all places, it is certainly a sad reflection on their ethical standards. However, Pope gives them a sound piece of advice : "Keep your compositions for nine years with you and then think of printing them." Judged from any moral standard, this is indeed an excellent advice. Again, Pope's account of his parents and his devotion to them, is also of great ethical value and is no doubt, worthy of emulation. Similarly, his sense of loyalty to his friends and gratitude to benefactors, particularly to the saviour of his life, bespeaks of a high moral sense on his own part. Finally, the passages on Addison, Philips, and Lords Halifax and Hervey, whatever the motives behind be, donot fail to preach mankind to guard themselves against the reprehensible characteristics depicted in them. Prof. Geoffrey Tillotson says : "No other poet has found his sense of beauty so closely and continuously allied to his sense of human values. No other poet has put or answered the question how to live with tenderer concern and more pointed wisdom. In his trembling eye, a virtue was as dear as a flower."

The Epistle is also full of literary interest. In the first place, it is a piece of brilliant satire. As Prof. Tillotson again points out, Pope makes a hot fire out of a few sticks which remain unflammable in the hands of others. In the second place, the Epistle is of great literary interest as a document of the life and conditions of men of letters in Pope's Age. Thirdly, it is a work of great auto-biographical significance. Finally, it is an example of excellent workmanship, particularly in the use of the heroic couplet. Leslie Stephen points out that his "verses are an excellent specimen of declamatory style—polished, epigrammatic and well-expressed." He paints his characters black and white with few dexterous strokes of his pen.

In conclusion, we may agree with Sir A. W. Ward and say : The Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot, singularly perfect and rounded in form, is, not withstanding its fragmentary origin, of the highest interest from an ethical as well as literary point of view."



## XIV

### LESLIE STEPHEN VIS-A-VIS EPISTLE

*"When Pope is trying to preach, to be ethical and philosophical, he is apt to fall into mouthing and lose his place ; but when he can forget his stilts, or point his morality by some concrete and personal instance, every word is alive."* DISCUSS.

This is a quotation from Leslie Stephen and it deserves careful examination. According to Stephen, Pope is an "agglutinative writer" or an author who gives together or combines simple words into compounds without change of form or loss of meaning, or simply unites independent fragments. This is Pope's weakness or greatness and it is to be found particularly in his *Essay on Man* and *The Moral Essays*. Referring to the former, Stephen says that most of the ideas expressed therein were the common property of many contemporary writers and that Pope has followed the modifications presented by Bolingbroke. To discuss the mode of Pope's manipulation of his material is indeed a study of a separate subject on the technical secrets of Pope's literary work. In the present context, it should suffice to say that he has accepted several fragments of the most heterogeneous systems of philosophy in the world and therefore his arguments lacked sustained reasoning, whatever "his philosophical stamina" might be. His conception of the universe is untenable and his demand for the suspension of laws of Nature is equally untenable. There is also no internal unity of thought and there are evidences of quaint conceits and palpable sophistry. Stephen has also in mind Pope's ethic epistles and the Stoical and Epicurean morals preached. So, Stephen says that when Pope is trying to preach or inculcate rules of quality, conduct and principle and assume the role of an ethical philosopher, he is apt to mouthing. In other words, Pope is very likely to fall into mouthing or uttering the common platitudes in a pompous

way. When he does this, naturally he loses his place or stand as a philosopher. In fact, he is definitely disqualified to be one.

Stephen then refers to the other aspect of the question. When Pope forgets his stilts or pompous and bombastic literary expressions and points his morality, (not the one he inculcates in the excellent 'mosaic work' he made out of a study of the books in Bolingbroke's library, namely—(1) Lock's Essay, (2) Shaftesbury's Characteristics, (3) Wollaston's Religion of Nature, (4) Clarke on the Attributes, and (5) Archbishop King on the Origin of Evil), and gives some concrete and personal instances, Stephen says, every word is alive. The reference here is to Pope's subsidiary writings, namely, Epistles and Satires and particularly to the *Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot* which is a prologue to them. Leslie Stephen therefore says that when Pope expresses his personal antipathies or personal attachments, he is at his best. Then Pope's lines 'begin to glow' with full vitality and susceptibility. This suggestion to be auto-biographical has indeed come to Pope from Horace, for the latter had described genuine experiences while the former has hitherto put together a string of commonplace.

*The Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot* suggests a number of conduct rules. Pope indeed points out his morality by referring to a number of instances in his life, say his personal attachments or antipathies. And their expression has become more impressive than when he is merely formulating a system of moral philosophy, be it a gathered one or an independent one. This epistle, no doubt, requires as Stephen puts it, a commentator, to explain the characters of the persons mentioned, the events of Pope's life, and the many lines which suggest only half or part of their meaning and finally the phrases "which throw sudden light upon hidden depths of feeling." When Pope thus points out his morality, or rather the morality of a person he wished to be or wished others to think him to be, he is indeed superb, for then every word or every phrase or every line glows! And in this remark, Leslie Stephen is perfectly correct.

The passages on Atticus and Sporus and a host of his enemies are all excellently chiselled expressions, though they are all the outcome of impulsive moods. "His emotion came in jets and gushes" and he could glance at things instantaneously and make clear his points "in short passages of imperishable

beauty." The most admired passage of Pope is his passage on his mother and it bespeaks of the duties of an obedient son. In it, we find only tenderness and his sense of duty. But in the passages which express his personal antipathy he reveals his marvellous effects of heroic couplets.

In conclusion, we are tempted to agree with Compton-Rickett and say : "If he is not to be reckoned with the master-spirits of English literature, he was, at any rate, an incomparable craftsman and delightful wit."

## XV

### POPE'S WORKS EVALUATED

*"Pope's satires and Epistles have a value for us as a contemporary record, in as much as they present the characters and reflect the manners of the period."*

DISCUSS.

Alexander Pope is the author of a number of satires and epistles which throw light on the men and manners of the period. Those works having been published and preserved in writing, serve the purpose of an authentic evidence of men and matters of the time. As most of these reflections refer to the same period as that of Pope, his works have the value of a contemporary record or representation made in a permanent form.

Pope's works present a number of characters, down from a penurious poetaster right up to an affluent patron. It was, no doubt, a common practice in the eighteenth century for a poet to offer his works for correction and criticism and for suggestion of improvements, to a friend, sometimes more learned than he and sometimes not. And Pope who had corrected the poems of Wycherley was therefore much in demand. Hence, the practice of poetasters pestering their superior poets with all kinds of request, in season and out of season, in place and out of place, without any sense of propriety and self-respect. No wonder, if poets flocked to Twickenham with requests for help!

Poverty might have been a reason for this lapse. Many men of letters turned hack-writers and catered to the tastes of unscrupulous politicians or men in power or of great influence. The conditions of the period were never conducive to family affection and good temper. Political pamphleteering became the order of the day and it no doubt "led to quarrels and personal abuse of an absurd and indecent malignancy." Pope's satires and epistles reveal how he had himself quarrelled with a number of authors, Dennis, Addison, Lady Mary, Philips and host of others. And quarrels arose out of misunderstanding, sinister motives and out of envy.

Raising subscriptions for the publication of a book or for the erection of a tomb for a poor poet, was a common thing in those days. Pope himself owed much of his prosperity to a *Homer* subscription ! But, he charges the several scribblers who insist on his subscriptions for their publications. Then again, there is the practice of dedicating literary works to noble patrons who sometimes give monetary help, sometimes make empty promises, sometimes offer drink or dinner and sometimes "offer in kind" (by reciting their own works and forcing them to listen to them.

Suspicious and distrust were rampant among men of letters of the time. If jealousy was found poets quarrelled. If plagiarism was detected, they indulged in indecent lampoons. Sometimes, out of sheer ill-will and malice, they used to spread scandals, black-mail virtuous women and cause pain to upright men. In that way, no one was free from fears of attacks from the men of letters of the period. In that sense, they spoiled the fair name of the profession.

James Sutherland says, "If Pope occasionally ridicules the diversions of the polite society that formed the main body of his readers, that only tells us that polite society in the eighteenth century, as in other periods, ran occasionally into excesses. The standards which Pope strove to maintain were not just the trivial conventions or prejudices of the fashionable and the well-to-do. So far as they can be defined at all, they were the standards of the man of sense, alive to every manifestation of folly and extravagance, every departure from right reason and moderation and good taste. The vanities of polite society are ridiculed in *The Rape of the Lock* ; tasteless extravagance and luxury in *Moral Essays III and IV* ; hack-writers, the contemporary theatre, schools and universities, the follies of empty-headed peers, and much else in *The Dunciad* and the *Imitations of Horace*." This apt remark of Sutherland establishes the fact that Pope's works have a great value for us as a contemporary record of the time.

Pope's satires and epistles also present to us the characters that lived in the age. And this delineation is indeed unique in its own way. Arbuthnot and his friends are brought into the focus and as Selincourt observes : "three or four of the finest spirits of the age, most notably Swift, Gay (the author of

*The Beggar's Opera*) and Arbuthnot (the physician and man of letters about whom, in that age of back-biting and malice, no single derogatory word has come down to us) never ceased to love him or he loved them." Pope presents the vainglorious Bufo, the common type of patron of his period, "fed on soft dedication all day long", pretending to be a sound critic though his judgment was next to nothing. Then the diatribe falls on critics from Bentley to Theobald who won popularity for their hard labour in the field of punctuation and scansion and not for their interpretation of the immortal poets they chose for criticism. This again, though not strictly applicable to Bentley and Theobald serves the purpose of representing a common type of critic who often missed the mark. The pen-portraits of Addison and Hervey were among the most famous of Pope's pictures. Pope praised the former as a true genius with utmost amiability in conversation and in life. But, according to Pope, Addison was a coward, jealous of others' rise in life. He was charged with an intolerant attitude at others' prosperity in life. He was also depicted to be enjoying patronising as he used to :

"Like Cato, give his little Senate laws,  
And sit attentive to his own applause."

Pope's portrait of Hervey as a man in gaudy silk, as a blood-sucking bug with golden wings, as "a painted child of dirt," as a tempter of Queen Caroline, as a strange mixture of the two sexes, as the very embodiment of a worthless Antithesis, as a fop at the toilet, and finally as a person who was up to anything, even if it came to licking the dust, is a complete one whatever its motives be. Thus Pope's characters are atonce individuals and also types. Finally, we should say : "Pope's *Imitations of Horace* or *The Dunciad* perhaps need to be written anew for each generation : the universal element remains, but the particular applications can be best supplied by each generation (and by each nation) out of its own experience." And in this way, Pope's works have the value of a contemporary record.

## XVI

### POPE'S USE OF THE HEROIC COUPLET

That verse in which epic poetry was written is called heroic verse, because it is employed to celebrate heroic deeds or exploits. In Greek and Latin this verse is in hexameter ; in English it is iambic pentameter with or without rhymes ; and in Italian it is *ottava rima*. In versification, a pair of lines whose end-words rhyme, is called a couplet.

In English, it was Chaucer who first introduced the deca-syllabic couplet. Douglas Bush says that his couplets "flow and ripple and eddy with the informal artlessness of every day speech." But, as Edith Sitwell remarks, they have "a kind of bucolic roughness and an absence of subtlety." In the Renaissance period the Chaucerian kind was bidden good-bye and the closed couplet with balanced and almost antithetical half-lines began to come into vogue.

This couplet was extensively used in the epic or heroic poetry of the 17th and 18th centuries and hence the name, heroic couplet. It was written in ten-syllable iambic verse, and in the neo-classical usage, the two lines were required to express a complete idea, with a subordinate pause at the end of the first line. But the sense ends with almost absolute regularity at the end of every second line. To give an example :

"You beat your pate, and fancy wit will come.

Knock as you please—there is nobody at home."

This is from Pope. To cite another example we may quote Goldsmith :

"Ill fares the land, to hastening ills a prey,

Where wealth accumulates, and men decay."

This form favoured "epigrammatic terseness and force, and was thus an admirable instrument in the hands of writers of satire and gnomic verse." Pope was the most skilful writer of heroic couplets, which were often used for epigrams. This is however to be distinguished from the *romantic* couplet in which the sense is allowed to flow on without interruption from

one couplet to another, as is the case in the versification of Keats or Leigh Hunt. In this form, the pause is made in any part of a line with a view to give more freedom and greater variety in the harmonies of versification. The writers of the Romantic Period carried the thought of the couplet beyond the two rhyming lines and therefore it is called open or run-on couplet while the former is called the closed couplet. Dryden and Pope mixed run-on and end-stop lines and couplets with variation of the number and weight of stresses and pauses, and with impressive skill. Thus the main interest in the Augustan Age centred in the heroic couplet, the closed, balanced and antithetical pattern. The chief characteristics of the heroic couplet may be stated to be, (1) end-stop, (2) a sort of conformation of the sentence-structure to the metrical pattern, (3) a tendency to use monosyllabled words or polysyllables within the line, (4) to fix emphasis in the last word of the line, and (5) an effective use of the caesura.

Pope's end-stops suit the length of his measure, are pointed, brief and precise. But Dryden provides in the couplet a ratiocinative unit. They are also useful in supplying the decorative or the argumentative element in the poems. Regarding metrical pattern it is always iambic pentameter and "the most completely evolved type of the heroic line is one composed of four main words arranged in pairs, so as to form a double antithesis." Pope is an expert in giving such amazing lines, though Dryden also achieved this feat to a certain extent. Mr. Ridley juxtaposes the following couplets, the first by Dryden and the second by Pope :

"Shadwell alone of all my sons is he  
Who stands confined in full stupidity."

(*Mac Flecknoe*).

Willing to wound, and yet afraid to strike,  
Just hint a fault, and hesitate dislike."

(*Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot*).

Ridley remarks : "Pope is making a series of points, planting four small poisoned darts. Dryden on the other hand, writes a line and a half without letting you know what is going to happen and then suddenly launches his knock-out blow." In other words, Dryden has a sting in the tail while it is evenly distributed in Pope.



The single syllables and polysyllables within the line are used by Pope with a dexterity beyond measure. Referring to the Sporus passage, it is pointed out how Pope's lines produce dirty fluttering sounds to portray the dirty thing in his mind, with the soft S's with viper-darts emanating from single-syllabled words :

"In puns, or politics, or tales, or lies,  
Or spite, or smut, or rhymes or blasphemies"

with the fluttering dirtiness of—

"Fop at the toilet, flatt'rer at the board,  
Now trips a lady, and now struts a lord."

The use of one-syllabled words among the two-syllabled and the three-syllabled, with their characteristic jerks, "makes for a puppet-like movement" and is in keeping with the character of Sporus who is more than a puppet.

Pope's use of the caesura or the pause (of varying depths) is indeed admirable. Edith Sitwell remarks that by the skilful placing of it, Pope is able "not only to vary the music of his verse but so as to heighten the meaning." This critic correctly refers to a passage in the *Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot* where Pope's placing of caesura has its intended effects :

"The Dog-star rages ! nay, 't is past a doubt,  
All Bedlam, or Parnassus, is let out :  
Fire in each eye, and papers in each hand,  
They rave, recite, and madden round the land."

Edith Sitwell says : "In this, the slightness of the pauses in the second line give the effect of a dishevelled procession streaming past one. In the fourth line, the fact that the first and the second verbs are alliterative, and rather long-sounding, with their hard R's, and that the third verb begins with a thick thumping M, gives the degree of irritation which was felt by the poet." This citation from Edith Sitwell goes to prove against the usual charge of monotony that is levelled against writers of heroic couplets in general and Pope in particular. Within the structure itself, there is thus infinite variation, as seen in the hands of Pope.

Both Pope and Dryden are masters in the use of balance which promotes the atmosphere of finality. Both of them have adapted their rhythmical emphasis to their meaning.

Alliteration, Rhyme, Antithesis, and use of monosyllables and polysyllables are only auxiliaries to produce the maximum effect. "What oft was thought, but ne'er so well expresst" seems to be the sum and substance of Pope's classical ideal and his semi-proverbial lines are "the evidence of the finality" of his statements, which give the expression to commonplace generalities. But, Pope is not so rational, moderate and urbane as his master Horace in his satires. In the words of Lytton Strachey, Pope "turned his screams into poetry with the enchantment of the heroic couplet", though it has become in his hands "a rapier of perfect flexibility and temper", as Courthope would believe.



**TEXT**  
***OF***  
**ALEXANDER POPE'S**  
**EPISTLE TO DR. ARBUTHNOT**



## XVII

### AN EPISTLE TO DR. ARBUTHNOT

#### ADVERTISEMENT

*To the first Publication of this Epistle*

This Paper is a sort of Bill of Complaint, begun many years since, and drawn up by snatches, as the several Occasions offer'd. I had no thoughts of publishing it, till it pleased some Persons of Rank and Fortune (the authors of Verses to the Imitator of Horace, and of an Epistle to a Doctor of Divinity from a Nobleman at Hampton Court) to attack in very extraordinary manner, not only my Writings (of which being publick the Public judge) but my Person, Morals and Family, whereof to those who know me not, a truer Information may be requisite. Being divided between the Necessity to say some- 10  
thing of Myself, and my own Laziness to undertake so awkward a Task, I thought it the shortest way to put the last hand to this Epistle. If it have any pleasing, it will be That by which I am most desirous to please, the Truth and the Sentiment ; and if anything offensive, it will be only to those I am least sorry to offend, the Vicious or the Ungenerous.

Many will know their own Pictures in it, there being not a Circumstance but what is true ; but I have, for the most part spar'd their Names, and they may escape being laugh'd at, if they please. 20

I would have some of them know, it was owing to the Request of the learned and candid Friend to whom it was inscribed, that I make not as free use of theirs as they have done of mine. However I shall have this Advantage, and Honour, on my side, that whereas by their proceeding, any abuse may be directed at any man, no Injury can possibly done by mine, since a Nameless character can never be found out, but by its Truth and Likeness. 28

## EPISTLE TO DR. ARBUTHNOT

BEING THE

### PROLOGUE TO THE SATIRES

P. SHUT, shut the door, good John ! fatigu'd, I said,  
Tie up the knocker, say I 'm sick, I 'm dead.  
The Dog-star rages ! nay 't is past a doubt,  
All Bedlam, or Parnassus, is let out :  
Fire in each eye, and papers in each hand,  
They rave, recite, and madden round the land.

What walls can guard me, or what shade can hide ?  
They pierce my thickets, thro' my Grot they glide ;  
By land, by water, they renew the charge ;  
They stop the chariot, and they board the barge. 10  
No place is sacred, not the Church is free ;  
Ev'n Sunday shines no Sabbath-day to me ;  
Then from the Mint walks forth the Man of rhyme,  
Happy to catch me just at Dinner-time.

Is there a Parson, much bemus'd in beer,  
A maudlin Poetess, a rhyming Peer,  
A Clerk, foredoom'd his father's soul to cross,  
Who pens a Stanza, when he should *engross* ?  
Is there, who, lock'd from ink and paper, scrawls  
With desp'rate charcoal round his darken'd walls ? 20  
All fly to TWIT'NAM, and in humble strain  
Apply to me, to keep them mad or vain.  
Arthur, whose giddy son neglects the Laws,  
Imputes to me and my damn'd works the cause :  
Poor Cornus sees his frantic wife elope,  
And curses Wit, and Poetry, and Pope.

Friend to my Life ! (which did not you prolog.  
The world had wanted many an idle song)  
What *Drop* or *Nostrum* can this plague remove ?  
Or which must end me, a Fool's wrath or love ? 30

A dire dilemma ! either way I 'm sped,  
 If foes, they write, if friends, they read me dead.  
 Seiz'd and tied down to judge, how wretched I !  
 Who can't be silent, and who will not lie.  
 To laugh, were want of goodness and of grace,  
 And to be grave, exceeds all Pow'r of face.  
 I sit with sad civility, I read  
 With honest anguish, and an aching head ;  
 And drop at last, but in unwilling ears,  
 This saving counsel, "Keep your piece nine years."

40

"Nine years !" cries he, who high in Drury-lane,  
 Lull'd by soft Zephyrs thro' the broken pane,  
 Rhymes ere he wakes, and prints before *Term* ends,  
 Oblig'd by hunger, and request of friends :  
 "The piece, you think, is incorrect ? why, take it,  
 I'm all submission, what you 'd have it, make it."

Three things another's modest wishes bound,  
 My Friendship, and a Prologue, and ten pound.

Pitholeon sends to me : "You know his Grace,  
 I want a Patron ; ask him for a Place."  
 "Pitholeon libell'd me,"—"but here 's a letter  
 Informs you, Sir, 't was when he knew no better.  
 Dare you refuse him ? Curll invites to dine,  
 He 'll write a *Journal*, or he 'll turn *Divine*."

50

Bless me ! a packet.—" 'T is a stranger sues,  
 A Virgin Tragedy, an Orphan Muse."  
 If I dislike it, "Furies, death and rage !"  
 If I approve, "Commend it to the Stage."  
 There (thank my stars) my whole Commission ends,  
 The Play'rs and I are, luckily, no friends,  
 Fir'd that the house reject him, " 'Sdeath I 'll print it,  
 And shame the fools——Your Int'rest, Sir, with Lintot !"  
 'Lintot, dull rogue ! will think your price too much :'  
 "Not, Sir, if you revise it, and retouch."  
 All my demurs but double his Attacks ;  
 At last he whispers, "Do ; and we go snacks."  
 Glad of a quarrel, straight I clap the door,

60



Sir, let me see your works and you no more.

'T is sung, when Midas' Ears began to spring,  
 (Midas, a sacred person and a king)  
 His very Minister who spy'd them first,  
 (Some say his Queen) was forc'd to speak, or burst.  
 And is not mine, my friend, a sorer case,  
 When ev'ry coxcomb perks them in my face ?  
 A. Good friend, forbear ! you deal in dang'rous things.  
 I 'd never name Queens, Ministers, or Kings ;  
 Keep close to Ears, and those let asses prick ;  
 'T is nothing— P. Nothing ? if they bite and kick ?  
 Out with it, DUNCIAD ! let the secret pass,  
 That secret to each fool, that he 's an Ass :  
 The truth once told (and wherefore should we lie ?)  
 The Queen of Midas slept, and so may I.

70

80

You think this cruel ? take it for a rule,  
 No creature smarts so little as a fool.  
 Let peals of laughter, Codrus ! round thee break,  
 Thou unconcern'd canst hear the mighty crack :  
 Pit, Box, and gall'ry in convulsions hurl'd,  
 Thou stand'st unshook amidst a bursting world.  
 Who shames a Scribbler ? break one cobweb thro",  
 He spins the slight, self-pleasing thread anew :  
 Destroy his fib or sophistry, in vain,  
 The creature 's at his dirty work again,  
 Thron'd in the centre of his thin designs,  
 Proud of a vast extent of flimsy lines !  
 Whom have I hurt ? has Poet yet, or Peer,  
 Lost the arch'd eye-brow, or Parnassian sneer ?  
 And has not Colley still his Lord, and whore ?  
 His Butchers Henley, his free-masons Moore ?  
 Does not one table Bavius still admit ?

90

Still to one Bishop Philips seem a wit ?  
 Still Sappho— A. Hold ! for God's sake—you 'll offend,  
 No Names !—be calm !—learn prudence of a friend !  
 I too could write, and I am twice as tall ;  
 But foes like these— P. Or ? Flatt'rer 's worse than all.

100

Of all mad creatures, if the learn'd are right,  
 It is the slaver kills, and not the bite.  
 A fool quite angry is quite innocent :  
 Alas ! 't is ten times worse when they *repent*.

One dedicates in high heroic prose,  
 And ridicules beyond a hundred foes : 110  
 One from all Grubstreet will my fame defend,  
 And more abusive, calls himself my friend.  
 This prints my *Letters*, that expects a bribe,  
 And others roar aloud, "Subscribe, subscribe."

There are, who to my person pay their court :  
 I cough like *Horace*, and, tho' lean, am short,  
*Ammon's* great son one shoulder had too high,  
 Such *Ovid's* nose, and "Sir ! you have an Eye"—  
 Go on, obliging creatures, make me see 120  
 All that disgrac'd my Betters, met in me.  
 Say for my comfort, languishing in bed,  
 "Just so Immortal *Maro* held his head :"  
 And when I die, be sure you let me know  
 Great *Homer* died three thousand years ago.

Why did I write ? what sin to me unknown  
 Dipt me in ink, my parents', or my own ?  
 As yet a child, nor yet a fool to fame,  
 Plis'd in numbers, for the numbers came.  
 I left no calling for this idle trade, 130  
 No duty broke, no father disobey'd.  
 The Muse but serv'd to ease some friend, not Wife,  
 To help me thro' this long disease, my Life,  
 To second, ARBUHTNOT ! thy Art and Care,  
 And teach the Being you preserv'd, to bear.

But why then publish ? *Granville* the polite,  
 And knowing *Walsh*, would tell me I could write ;  
 Well-natur'd *Garth* inflam'd with early praise ;  
 And *Congreve* lov'd, and *Swift* endur'd my lays ;  
 The courtly *Talbot*, *Somers*, *Sheffield*, read ; 140  
 Ev'n mitred *Rochester* would nod the head,  
 And *St. John's* self (great *Dryden's* friends before)

With open arms receiv'd one Poet more.  
 Happy my studies, when by these approv'd !  
 Happier their author, when by these belov'd !  
 From these the world will judge of men and books,  
 Not from the *Burnets*, *Oldmixons* and *Cookes*.

Soft were my numbers ; who could take offence,  
 While pure Description held the place of Sense ?  
 Like gentle *Fanny's* was my flow'ry theme, 150  
 A painted mistress, or a purling stream.  
 Yet then did *Gildon* draw his venal quill ;—  
 I wish'd the man a dinner, and sat still.  
 Yet then did *Dennis* rave in furious fret ;  
 I never answer'd—I was not in debt.  
 If want provok'd, or madness made them print,  
 I wag'd no war with *Bedlam* or the *Mint*.

Did some more sober Critic come abroad ;  
 If wrong, I smil'd ; if right, I kiss'd the rod.  
 Pains, reading, study, are their just pretence,  
 And all they want is spirit, taste, and sense. 160  
 Commas and points they set exactly right,  
 And 't were a sin to rob them of their mite.  
 Yet ne'er one sprig of laurel grac'd these ribalds,  
 From slashing *Bentley* down to pidling *Tibalds* :  
 Each wight, who reads not, and but scans and spells.  
 Each Word-catcher, that lives on syllables,  
 Ev'n such small Critics some regard may claim,  
 Preserv'd in *Milton's* or in *Shakespeare's* name.  
 Pretty ! in amber to observe the forms  
 Of hairs, or straws, or dirt, or grubs, or worms ! 170  
 The things, we know, are neither rich nor rare,  
 But wonder how the devil they got there.

Were others angry : I excus'd them too ;  
 Well might they rage, I gave them but their due.  
 A man's true merit 't is not hard to find ;  
 But each man's secret standard in his mind,  
 That Casting-weight pride adds to emptiness,  
 This, who can gratify ? for who can guess ?

The Bard whom pilfer'd Pastorals renown,  
 Who turns a Persian tale for half a Crown, 180  
 Just writes to make his barrenness appear,  
 And strains, from hard-bound brains, eight lines a year ;  
 He, who still wanting, tho' he lives on theft,  
 Steals much, spends little, yet has nothing left :  
 And He, who now to sense, now nonsense leaning,  
 Means not, but blunders round about a meaning :  
 And He, whose fustian 's so sublimely bad,  
 It is not Poetry, but prose run mad :  
 All these, my modest Satire bade *translate*,  
 And own'd that nine such Poets made a *Tate*. 190  
 How did they fume, and stamp, and roar, and chafe !  
 And swear, not ADDISON himself was safe.

Peace to all such ! but were there One whose fires  
 True Genius kindles, and fair Fame inspires ;  
 Blest with each talent and each art to please,  
 And born to write, converse, and live with ease :  
 Should such a man, too fond to rule alone,  
 Bear, like the Turk, no brother near the throne.  
 View him with scornful, yet with jealous eyes,  
 And hate for arts that caus'd himself to rise ; 200  
 Damn with faint praise, assent with civil leer,  
 And without sneering, teach the rest to sneer ;  
 Willing to wound, and yet afraid to strike,  
 Just hint a fault, and hesitate dislike ;  
 Alike reserv'd to blame, or to commend,  
 A tim'rous foe, and a suspicious friend ;  
 Dreading ev'n fools, by Flatterers besieg'd.  
 And so obliging, that he ne'er oblige'd ;  
 Like *Cato*, give his little Senate laws,  
 And sit attentive to his own applause ; 210  
 While Wits and Templars ev'ry sentence raise,  
 And wonder with a foolish face of praise :—  
 Who but must laugh, if such a man there be ?  
 Who would not weep, if ATTICUS were he ?

What tho' my Name stood rubric on the walls

Or plaister'd posts, with claps, in capitals ?  
 Or smoking forth, a hundred hawkers' load,  
 On wings of winds came flying all abroad ?  
 I sought no homage from the Race that write ;  
 I kept, like *Asian* Monarchs, from their sight : 220  
 Poems I heeded (now be-rhym'd so long)  
 No more than thou, great *GEORGE* ! a birth-day song.  
 I ne'er with wits or witlings pass'd my days,  
 To spread about the itch of verse and praise ;  
 Nor like a puppy, daggled† thro' the town,  
 To fetch and carry sing-song up and down ;  
 Nor at Rehearsals sweat, and mouth'd, and cry'd,  
 With handkerchief and orange at my side ;  
 But sick of fops, and poetry, and prate,  
 To *Bufo* left the whole *Castalian* state 230

Proud as *Apollo* on his forked hill,  
 Sat full-blown *Bufo*, puff'd by ev'ry quill ;  
 Fed with soft Dedication all day long,  
*Horace* and he went hand in hand in song.  
 His Library (where busts of Poets dead  
 And a true *Pindar* stood without a head,)  
 Receiv'd of wits an undistinguish'd race ;  
 Who first his judgment ask'd, and then a place ;  
 Much they extoll'd his pictures, much his seat,  
 And flatter'd ev'ry day, and some days eat : 240  
 Till grown more frugal in his riper days,  
 He paid some bards with port, and some with praise ;  
 To some a dry rehearsal was assign'd,  
 And others (harder still) he paid in kind.  
*Dryden* alone (what wonder ?) came not nigh ;  
*Dryden* alone escap'd this judging eye :  
 But still the *Great* have kindness in reserve,  
 He help'd to bury whom he help'd to starve.

May some choice patron bless each gray goose quill !  
 May ev'ry *Bavius* have his *Bufo* still ! 250  
 So, when a Statesman wants a day's defence,

† Dragged through the mire.

Or Envy holds a whole week's war with Sense,  
 Or simple pride for flatt'ry makes demands,  
 May dunce by dunce be whistled off my hands !  
 Blest be the *Great* ! for those they take away,  
 And those they left me ; for they left me *GAY* ;  
 Left me to see neglected Genius bloom,  
 Neglected die, and tell it on his tomb :  
 Of all thy blameless life the sole return  
 My Verse, and *QUEENSB'RY* weeping o'er thy urn. 260

Oh let me live my own, and die so too !  
 (To live and die is all I have to do :)  
 Maintain a Poet's dignity and ease,  
 And see what friends, and read what books I please ;  
 Above a Patron, tho' I condescend  
 Sometimes to call a minister my friend.  
 I was not born for Courts or great affairs ;  
 I pay my debts, believe, and say my prayers ;  
 Can sleep without a Poem in my head ;  
 Nor know, if *Dennis* be alive or dead. 270

Why am I ask'd what next shall see the light ?  
 Ieav'ns ! was I born for nothing but to write ?  
 Has Life no joys for me ? or, (to be grave)  
 Have I no friend to serve, no soul to save ?  
 "I found him close with *Swift*"—"Indeed ? no doubt,  
 (Cries prating *Balbus*) 'something will come out.'  
 'T is all in vain, deny it as I will.  
 'No, such a Genius never can lie still ;'  
 And then for mine obligingly mistakes  
 The first Lampoon Sir *Will*, or *Bubo* makes. 280  
 Poor guiltless I ! and can I choose but smile,  
 When ev'ry Coxcomb knows me by my *Style* ?

Curst be the verse, how well soe'er it flow,  
 That tends to make one worthy man my foe,  
 Give Virtue scandal, Innocence a fear,  
 Or from the soft-eyed Virgin steal a tear,  
 But he who hurts a harmless neighbour's peace,  
 Insults fall'n worth, or Beauty in distress,

Who loves a Lie, lame Slander helps about, 290  
 Who writes a Libel, or who copies out :  
 That Fop, whose pride affects a patron's name,  
 Yet absent, wounds an author's honest fame :  
 Who can *your* merit *selfishly* approve,  
 And show the *sense* of it without the *love* ;  
 Who has the vanity to call you friend,  
 Yet wants the honour, injur'd, to defend ;  
 Who tells whate'er you think, whate'er you say,  
 And if he lie not, must at least betray :  
 Who to the *Dean*, and *silver bell* can swear,  
 And see at *Canons* what was never there ; 300  
 Who reads, but with a lust to misapply,  
 Make Satire a Lampoon, and Fiction, Lie.  
 A lash like mine no honest man shall dread,  
 But all such babbling blockheads in his stead.

Let *Sporus* tremble—A. What ? that thing of silk,  
*Sporus*, that mere white curd of Ass's milk ?  
 Satire or sense, alas ! can *Sporus* feel ?  
 Who breaks a butterfly upon a wheel ?  
 P. Yet let me flap this bug with gilded wings,  
 This painted child of dirt, that stinks and stings ; 310  
 Whose buzz the witty and the fair annoys,  
 Yet wit ne'er tastes, and beauty ne'er enjoys :  
 So well-bred spaniels civilly delight  
 In mumbling of the game they dare not bite.  
 Eternal smiles his emptiness betray,  
 As shallow streams run dimpling all the way. .  
 Whether in florid impotence he speaks,  
 And, as the prompter breathes, the puppet squeaks ;  
 Or at the ear of *Eve*, familiar Toad,  
 Half froth, half venom, spits himself abroad, 320  
 In puns, or politics, or tales, or lies,  
 Or spite, or smut, or rhymes, or blasphemies.  
 His wit all see-saw, between *that* and *this*,  
 Now high, now low, now master up, now miss,  
 And he himself one vile Antithesis.

Amphibious thing ! that acting either part.  
 The trifling head or the corrupted heart,  
 Fop at the toilet, flatt'rer at the board,  
 Now trips a Lady, and now struts a Lord.  
*Eve's* tempter thus the Rabbins have exprest, 330  
 A Cherub's face, a reptile all the rest ;  
 Beauty that shocks you, parts that none will trust ;  
 Wit that can creep, and pride that licks the dust.

Not Fortune's worshipper, nor fashion's fool,  
 Not Lucre's madman, nor Ambition's tool,  
 Not proud, or servile ;—be one Poet's praise,  
 That, if he pleas'd, he pleas'd by manly ways :  
 That Flatt'ry, ev'n to Kings, he heid a shame,  
 And thought a Lie in verse or prose the same.  
 That not in Fancy's maze he wander'd long, 340  
 But stoop'd to Truth, and moraliz'd his song :  
 That not for Fame, but Virtue's better end,  
 He stood the furious foe, the timid friend,  
 The damning critic, half approving wit,  
 The coxcomb hit, or fearing to be hit ;  
 Laugh'd at the loss of friends he never had,  
 The dull, the proud, the wicked, and the mad ;  
 The distant threats of vengeance on his head,  
 The blow unfelt, the tear he never shed ;  
 The tale reviv'd, the lie so oft o'erthrown, 350  
 Th' imputed trash, and dulness not his own ;  
 The morals blacken'd when the writings scape,  
 The libell'd person, and the pictur'd shape ;  
 Abuse, on all he lov'd, or lov'd him, spread,  
 A friend in exile, or a father, dead ;  
 The whisper, that to greatness still too near,  
 Perhaps, yet vibrates on his SOV'REIGN's ear :  
 Welcome for thee, fair *Virtue* ! all the past ;  
 For thee, fair *Virtue* ! welcome ev'n the *last* !

A. But why insult the poor, affront the great ? 360  
 P. A knave's a knave, to me, in ev'ry state :  
 Alike my scorn, if he succeed or fail,



*Sporus* at court, or *Japhet* in a jail,  
 A hireling scribbler, or a hireling peer,  
 Knight of the post corrupt, or of the shire ;  
 If on a Pillory, or near a Throne,  
 He gain his Prince's ear, or lose his own.

Yet soft by nature, more a dupe than wit,  
*Sappho* can tell you how this man was bit ;  
 This dreaded Sat'r'ist *Dennis* will confess 370  
 Foe to his pride, but friend to his distress :  
 So humble, he has knock'd at *Tibbald's* door,  
 Has drunk with *Cibber*, nay has rhym'd for *Moore*.  
 Full ten years slander'd, did he once reply ?  
 Three thousand suns went down on *Welsted's* lie.  
 To please a Mistress one aspers'd his life ;  
 He lash'd him not, but let her be his wife.  
 Let *Budgel* charge low *Grubstreet* on his quill,  
 And write whate'er he pleas'd, except his Will ;  
 Let the two *Curlls* of Town and Court, abuse 380  
 His father, mother, body, soul, and muse.  
 Yet why ? that Father held it for a rule,  
 It was a sin to call our neighbour fool :  
 That harmless Mother thought no wife a whore :  
 Hear this, and spare his family, *James Moore* !  
 Unspotted names, and memorable long !  
 If there be force in Virtue, or in Song.

Of gentle blood (part shed in Honour's cause,  
 While yet in *Britain* Honour had applause)  
 Each parent sprung—A. What fortune, pray ?—P. Their own, 390  
 And better got, than *Bestia's* from the throne:  
 Born to no Pride, inheriting no Strife, &  
 Nor marrying Discord in a noble wife,  
 Stranger to civil and religious rage,  
 The good man walk'd innoxious thro' his age.  
 Nor Courts he saw, no suits would ever try,  
 Nor dar'd an Oath, nor hazarded a Lie.  
 Un-learn'd, he knew no schoolman's subtle art,

No language, but the language of the heart.  
By Nature honest, by Experience wise, 400  
Healthy by temp'rance, and by exercise ;  
His life, tho' long, to sickness past unknown,  
His death was instant, and without a groan.  
O grant me, thus to live, and thus to die !  
Who sprung from Kings shall know less joy than I.

O Friend ! may each domestic bliss be thine !  
Be no unpleasing Melancholy mine :  
Me, let the tender office lone engage,  
To rock the cradle of reposing Age, 410  
With lenient arts extend a Mother's breath,  
Make Languor smile, and smooth the bed of Death,  
Explore the thought, explain the asking eye,  
And keep a while one parent from the sky !  
On cares like these if length of days attend,  
May Heav'n, to bless those days, preserve my friend,  
Preserve him social, cheerful, and serene,  
And just as rich as when he serv'd a QUEEN.  
A. Whether that blessing be deny'd or giv'n,  
Thus far was right, the rest belongs to Heav'n.



NOTE  
*ON*  
ALEXANDER POPE'S  
EPISTLE TO DR. ARBUTHNOT



## XVIII

### NOTES

[ FIGURES IN THE MARGIN REFER TO LINES ]

#### Advertisement

(An epistle is a letter. This epistle was addressed to Dr. Arbuthnot who was Alexander Pope's physician and friend. Dr. Arbuthnot was a member of the informal Club, called Scriblerus Club and was famous not only for being a very successful medical practitioner but also for being a sound mathematician and profound classical scholar. He was also Queen Anne's physician from 1709. He won the tribute of Dr. Johnson who said that Dr. Arbuthnot was "*a man estimable for his learning, amiable for his life and venerable for his piety.*" In this epistle, Alexander Pope explains his character and reveals himself at his best. He argues that a truer information about himself may be requisite, after the severe criticism written against him by Lord Hervey and Lady Mary Wortley Montague. Though lazy and unwilling to undertake the awkward task of vindicating himself he maintains that he is desirous of pleasing the readers of his epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot, only by truth and sentiment and that he is not sorry at all for offending the vicious and ungenerous persons the epistle attacks. He further pleads that he has spared their names and hence they may escape being laughed at. This sparing he admits of having done at the instance of his friend Dr. Arbuthnot and it means honour and advantage to him. Any abuse may be directed at any person, but Pope believes that his criticism cannot injure him, as the attack is made against a nameless character, and the real character cannot be found out but by its truth and likeness.

#### Title

**Epistle : Letter.**

**Dr. Arbuthnot :** Pope's physician and friend. Member of the Scriblerus Club. A profound mathematician and

classical scholar of the time. Also Queen Anne's physician.

**Advertisement** : Public announcement by placards etc., but here in books or journals.

1. **Bill of complaint** : A note or a draft programme announcing formal accusations or grievances.
2. **By snatches** : in parts, (because the epistle was written in parts on different dates.)
4. **Persons of Rank and Fortune** : Persons occupying high positions and well-placed in life, commanding wealth, power and popularity.

**Authors** : (The reference is to the two persons of rank and fortune, namely, Lord Hervey and Lady Mary Wortley Montague, who joined together in attacking Pope, the imitator of Horace. Their attack was published in 1733. Harvey wrote a separate attack in the form of an epistle to a Doctor of Divinity, in Nov., 1733.

9. **May be requisite** : may be necessary. (Pope explains that at first he had no idea of publishing this epistle, but the attacks of the above authors against him, his morals and family, prompted him to vindicate his position by supplying true information about himself.)
22. **The learned and candid friend** : Refers to Dr. Arbuthnot who is not only learned but also outspoken by nature. (This is no doubt a genuine compliment, when Pope describes his friend as learned and candid.)

## Text

**Prologue** : preliminary discourse.

**To the satires** : to compositions in verse or prose holding up vice or folly to ridicule or lampooning individuals.

**Shut, shut the door** : close the door (said in impatience or vexation.)

**Good John** : the name of his old and faithful servant by name, John Searl. Pope always regarded him as a good servant and therefore left him £ 100 in his will.

**Fatigued** : tired. (Pope says that he was tired of the Poetasters who frequently visited him. So, cries out to his servant to tie up the knocker.)

2. **Knocker** : appendage usually of iron or brass, so hinged to door that it may be struck against metal plate to call attention. (Pope wants that the knocker at his gate should be tied up so as to prevent the importunate and unwelcome visitors, here poetasters, from disturbing him.) The practice was that the knocker was either tied up or wrapped in flannel bands.

**Say I'm sick** : (send away the visitors under the pretext that I am sick.)

**I'am dead** : (or say that I am about to die and send them away.)

3. **The Dog-star rages** : The brightest star known as Sirius, in the Constellation called, Canis Major is furious. (Pope attributes the pernicious influence of the Dog-star to that of the unwelcome poetasters who were harassing with requests for opinions, suggestions for improvement and recommendations. It should be remembered in this context that when the star becomes visible normally from the 3rd July to 11th August, it exercises its dangerous influence, particularly on dogs which are most apt to run mad. Pope means to say that this maddening influence of the Dog-star has spread to the visitors who were madly and meaninglessly persecuting him.)

Pope says in his *Dunciad* :

“Now flam'd the Dog-star's unpropitious ray,  
Smote ev'ry brain and withered ev'ry Bay”.

3. **Nay, 'tis past a doubt** : no, it is beyond doubt.
4. **All Bedlam, or Parnassus, is let out** : It is something like the entire lunatic asylum or the Muses living on the Parnassus mountain, are let loose on him. (Bedlam is the name of a lunatic asylum at Lambeth in London and its foundation dates from 1247. Parnassus is a mountain in Greece near Delphi, and it is believed that the Muses dwell on this mountain.)



5. **Fire in each eye, and papers in each hand :** In the eyes of every one of these visitors there is the spark of poetic inspiration, and in the hands of every one of them there are papers containing earlier attacks (on me) of such inspiration.

6. **Rave :** cry like mad persons.

**Recite :** repeat aloud or declaim from memory.

**Madden round the land :** wander like mad men round my land or house. (It is interesting to note in this context, that a *recitator* who insists on others to listen to his own writings is a standing type of bore and that he should be asked to pay a tax, as Goldsmith points out in one of his interesting essays.)

7. **Walls :** house (metonymy).

**Shades :** trees (metonymy). (Pope then puts this despairing question if there is any house or garden which can protect him from the onslaughts of these poetasters.)

8. **They :** the unwelcome visitors.

**Pierce my thickets :** penetrate or break through my shady grove or the shrubberies of my garden. Dyson explains the line thus : "The grounds of Pope's villa at Twickenham were cut in two by the road from London to Hampton Court. To avoid crossing this road, he had an underground passage made beneath it which contained his famous grotto."

**Thro' my Grot they glide :** pass gently and imperceptibly through my grotto or artificial cave adorned with shells and used as a cool retreat. (A. W. Ward speaks of Pope's villa at Twickenham with a grotto. He says : "The favourite object of his efforts was the famous *grotto*, in reality, a tunnel beneath the turnpike road which divided the two parts of the garden. It contained a spring and could accordingly be credited with a nymph ; and in its diminutive recesses were distributed a variety of eccentric ornaments.") Pop.'s idea is that he is not free from the onslaughts of these poetasters wherever he be, be it either the garden or the grotto.

9. **By land, by water, they renew the charge :** They repeat their attacks coming to my house by land as well as by water.  
(Access to Pope's villa can be had both by land and water. Twickenham is situated on the northern bank of the Thames and the visitors can go to his villa by taking boats as well.)
10. **They stop the chariot :** *i.e.*, when Pope is going in his carriage by road, they stop it.  
**They board the barge :** When Pope is travelling in a boat, they get into it and harass him.
11. **No place is sacred :** No place is consecrated or made holy for him. (In other words, Pope is not free from these pests at any place.)  
**Not the Church is free :** even at the sacred temple, he is not allowed to have freedom from these poetasters.
12. **Ev'n Sunday shines no Sabbath-day to me :** Sunday even does not give religious rest. (Sunday, the seventh day in the week is usually appointed as the Sabbath-day or the day of religious rest. But to Pope even Sunday is no day of religious rest, because debtors, here the debtor-poetasters, freely come out, without any fear of arrest, to pester Pope. As Law allows all debtors freedom of movement without fear of punishment on the Sabbath-day, the poetasters chose that day to persecute Pope freely.)
13. **The Mint :** (Warburton explains this to be "a place to which insolvent debtors retired to enjoy an illegal protection and to shield one another, from the persecution of their creditors.") Originally a mint or house where money was coined, under State authority, must have stood on the site and hence the name of the place. H. V. D. Dyson's note on this word is interesting. He writes, "The district in Southwark which was in the neighbourhood of what had formerly been the Mint, was a sanctuary for debtors. They were free from arrest on Sunday."  
**The Man of Rhyme :** The poetaster.
4. **Happy to catch me just at Dinner-time :** (The poetaster is) very happy to take hold of him at the dinner time, (expecting Pope to invite him to join at the dinner.)

It is thus an attack on the poor poetaster who times his visit carefully, with the hope of being invited to participate in the dinner. This may be due to the visitor's poverty, but Pope is indeed ungenerous in ridiculing men for their poverty. Mark Pattison offers his plain commentary on this line thus : "A pardonable feature of Pope's satire is his constant harping on the beggarly miseries of poor authors. When we call to mind that he owed his own easy circumstances to the Homer subscription, we are reminded of his own line on Addison, '*And hate for arts that caused himself to rise.*'"

15. **Is there a Parson, much bemus'd in beer :** (Pope gives a list of persons who harass him.) Among them there is a parson (rector or vicar or any beneficed clergyman) stupefied by too much of drink.

*Note.* We have the authority of Elwin and Courthope who found a reference in all probability to Lawrence Eusden, Rector of Coningsby in Lincolnshire. This rector died five years after the publication of the *Epistle to Arbuthnot*, i.e., in 1730. In a short pointed line, Pope brings out the character of the rector.

16. **A maudlin Poetess :** a poetess in the tearful stage of drunkenness.

(This reference is attributed to Mrs. Sykins, an Irish poetess who was given a letter of introduction to Pope by his friend, Swift. But she only sent the letter to Pope's house without caring to call on him. This naturally offended Pope and he flings a sting at her by exposing her mawkishly sentimental nature, as a result of drink.

**A rhyming Peer :** a nobleman practising in the art of rhyme.

17. **A Clerk :** A lawyer.

**Foredoom'd his father's soul to cross :** destined to cross or thwart his father's desire or ambition. (Here, the clerk does not fulfil his father's ambition by sticking to legal profession, by writing documents, but instead takes to writing poetry, and thus is destined to cross his father's soul.

In this line also there is a sting, but it is difficult to say whom Pope is attacking.

18. **Who pens a stanza when he should engross :** who writes verses when he should, according to his father's will, write legal documents in large letters. *Engross* is a legal term meaning, "express in legal form."
19. **Is there :** there is.  
**who :** one who.  
**Lock'd from ink and paper :** deprived of writing material.  
**Scrawls :** scribbles.
20. **With desp'rate charcoal round his darken'd walls :** (The writer scribbles) with a piece of charcoal (because he is deprived of writing materials) on the walls of a dark cell (into which he is thrown) in a reckless way from despair. *Desperate* is a transferred epithet which refers to the violent and lawless nature of the scribbler who stakes all on a small chance. The idea is that some of these poetasters have such an urge to write verses that even if they are thrown into a dark dungeon and deprived of ink and paper, they recklessly catch hold of a piece of charcoal and write frenziedly with it on the walls. And there is one such poetaster among his visitors.  
 It is interesting to note how "Pope's description was almost literally realised in the melancholy history of Christopher Smart, who, in 1763, being in confinement, indented a poem on the wainscot of his cell with the head of a key."
21. **All fly to Twit'nam :** All come to Pope's villa at Twickenham. The poet preferred to call it Twitenham. *All* refers to the persons listed above, namely, a parson stupefied in beer, a maudlin poetess, a rhyming peer, a lawyer dabbling his time in verses, an inspired and desperate poetaster ; all these rush along and pass rapidly or move quickly to Twickenham.  
**In humble strain :** in an humble manner.
22. **Apply to me :** request me (to listen to their poems.)  
**To Keep them mad or vain :** to turn them mad by my severe criticism or denial or make them feel proud by my praise of those poems. In the next four lines 23 to 26, Pope complains how he is blamed for everything.
- 23-24. **Arthur :** Arthur Moore—name of a Parliament Member from the Grimbley Constituency (1706-22) and Commis-

sioner of Trade and Plantations under Queen Anne. He was well-known in the fashionable world. (His son James Moore and afterwards Moore-Smythe became the object of Pope's scorn. Moore-Smythe was guilty of plagiarism for he stole some of the lines which Pope addressed to Martha Blount on her birth-day.)

**Whose giddy son :** *i.e.*, James Moore-Smythe under the influence of drink. (He was pilloried in the *Dunciad*, ii. 35-50).

**Neglects the Laws :** violates the regulations of either literature or of the country.

24. **Imputes to me and my damned works the cause :** (Pope is held responsible for such a violation of rules) on account of his *damned works*. The reason imputed is, no doubt, silly. But it is a telling commentary on men and matters.
25. **Cornus :** (This is a fanciful name given by Pope to Lord Walpole).

**Frantic wife :** Margaret, Lady Walpole, daughter and heiress of Samuel Rolle of Haynton, Devon. She was vivacious and charming in manners and was warmly praised by Lady Mary Wortley Montague, in her Letters. However, Pope calls her *frantic* or mad as she left her husband within nine years of married life. We have also the authority of Horace Walpole who calls her *half-mad*. When she left her husband, a poem was written by the Beef-steak Club, addressing her with the following lines :

"Go sprightly Rolle, go traverse earth and sea,  
And fly the land where beauty is not free."

26. **And curses Wit, and Poetry and Pope :** (If Lady Walpole deserts her husband) Walpole blames Pope because his poetry and wit were held responsible for filling her mind with evil thoughts.
27. **Friend to my life :** (This is an address to Dr. Arbuthnot who treated Pope in his illness and preserved his health and life ; hence friend to life.)  
**Which did not you prolong :** if you did not extend or lengthen (the period of life).
28. **The world had wanted many an idle song :** The world would be in want of his numerous poems which he modestly considers as idle.

29. **Drop** : medicinal drop.  
**Nostrum** : patent remedy.  
**Can this plague remove** : Can remove this affliction or nuisance ? (Pope considers, the visits of several poetasters as an affliction or terrible nuisance and asks his physician-friend, if there is any remedy to be cured of that plague).
30. **Or which must end, a Fool's wrath or love ?** : (The question implies a request to be told as to how he would put an end to the anger or love of a fool, because both are according to him, fatal.)
31. **A dire dilemma** : a great fix.  
**Either way I'm sped** : either way, I am *blessed* (used in an ironical sense).
32. **If foes, they write, if friends they read me dead** : (If foes they write me dead ; if friends they read me dead). If enemies, they take his life out by the lampoons, if friends they bore to the quick by reading to him their endless compositions.
33. **Seiz'd and tied down to judge, how wretched I** : being forced to listen to their poems (which is trash), I feel myself very wretched or miserable.
34. **Who can't be silent** : (*Who* refers to *I* in the previous line.) *i.e.*, Pope admits that he cannot remain silent, if he does not approve of them.  
**And who will not lie** : and while expressing an opinion does not like to tell a falsehood (so as to please them). Here Pope is paying himself a compliment to his own nature.
35. **To laugh** : (After hearing or seeing their compositions) to laugh (at their low standard)  
**Want of goodness and grace** : lack of kindness and decency or etiquette.
36. **To be grave** : to remain serious (without offering a frank opinion).  
**Exceeds all pow'r of face** : is beyond his self-control.
37. **Sad civility** : The sense of being polite (to the poetasters indeed causes him pain or makes him sad).
38. **Honest anguish** : sincere feeling of pain.

39-40. **Drop at last but in unwilling ears, this saving counsel :** give in the end, the honest advice for the salvation of his visitors who receive it rather unwillingly.

40. **Keep your piece nine years :** keep your work for nine years (without hurrying to publish it). (It is interesting to note in this context that Horace also gives the same advice in his book, *Arts Poetica*. He says, "Do not write unless by the Muse ; submit your work to a competent judge ; keep it by you for nine years.")

41. **Drury Lane :** Once a fashionable quarter, but later, was reduced to the status of a poor author's residential place. It was noted for its garrets and was also frequented by people of doubtful character.

42. **Lull'd by soft Zephyrs :** induced to sleep by the west wind. (Pope uses this phrase in an ironical manner. *Zephyr* or the west wind is not noted for its cold blasts and gentility. Further, it does not lull a person to sleep ; it only disturbs his sleep.)

**Thro' the broken pane :** Through the broken window-panes. (Pope's point is that most of the poetasters dwell in the unwholesome garrets being exposed to inclement weather. Pope is simply alluding to miserable living conditions of the poetaster).

43. **Rhymes ere he wakes :** writes verses before he is fully awake. (The poetaster having been very much disturbed in sleep in his unwholesome garret cannot feel himself fully alert and fresh, when he starts writing verses).

**And prints before Term ends :** gets his poems printed before the season for printing (in London) is over. (In other words, he publishes them rather hastily).

44. **Obliged by hunger, and request of friends :** compelled by starvation (due to his bad financial position) and also at the request of his well-wishers (who are eager to see them in print.)

**Note :—**The second reason is, of course, not so compelling a reason as the first. Pope gives it so as to balance the first part of the line.

45-46. (These lines are in the form of a question with a request implied, that Pope may kindly keep the poem with him.)

and make the necessary corrections in their compositions, in case there are mistakes in them.

- 47-48. (Another poetaster modestly expresses his desire to win three favours, 1. Pope's friendship, 2. a prologue to his work to be written by Pope, and 3. a loan of ten pounds.) It is interesting to note in this context, that it was a practice of the time that authors of scant repute got prefaces or prologues written by established men of letters, so that they might be able to push the sale of the book. In 1733, Pope wrote a prologue to a play which was acted for the benefit of his enemy Dennis. Pope mentions *Ten Pound* in the end, only to heighten the effect. It is not a remark that calls for sympathy or compassion for the poverty of the poetaster, but a cruel and ungenerous hit against the needy writers. It is exactly this attitude which Leslie Stephen was unable to appreciate, on the part of Pope.)
49. **Pitholeon** : (This is the name of a poet who is the target of Pope's attack. Critics are of opinion that it refers to one of the forms whose names were associated with it. First, there was a Pitholeon, a foolish poet at Rhodes who had great pretensions to the knowledge of Greek. Secondly, Pope had long-standing animosity with Leonard Welsted, a poet and critic of the time. Therefore, in all probability Pope must have intended to satirise Welsted, in this line. There is also a third view according to which Thomas Cooke was taken to be the butt of ridicule. Cooke libelled against Pope and also apologized to Pope for doing so, but as the apology was not accepted, Cooke renewed his attack in the London Journal. So, Pope hated him as a hanger-on of the Whigs and satirized him mercilessly in *The Dunciad*.)
- His grace** : his grace, i.e., the Duke.
50. **I want a Patron : ask him for a place** : I am in need of a Patron to help me financially or in getting a job, so kindly recommend to the duke to give me some employment.
- Libelled me** : attacked me slanderously.
51. **But here's a letter** : (But, he sent) a letter of apology.
52. **Inform you, Sir** : (*You* is dative and *Sir* is addressed to Dr. Arbuthnot.) The explanation (for the libel) is as follows.



'T was when he knew no letter : that it was written when Pitholeon did not understand Pope's character fully.

53. **Dare you refuse him ?** : (*You* again is dative.) The question implies a conditional clause, *if his request is rejected*.

**Curll invites him to dine with him** : Curll, the book-seller and publisher (who is Pope's enemy) will invite him to dinner. The fact is, that Curll once invited him to dinner and at his instance *Pitholeon* wrote scandalous attacks against Pope in Journals. The point is, if Pope refuses to recommend this Pitholeon to the Duke, then he would join Curll the notorious publisher to carry on libels against him.

**Curll** : John Edmund Curll. (He was a notorious book-seller and publisher. He earned great notoriety for publishing scandalous and seditious literature and even Pope's private letters. It appears that he wielded tremendous influence on the authors of the time and as John Butt would say : "Pope had suffered from his attentions since 1714." Pope took the revenge on him, by secretly administering on him an emetic which caused vomiting.)

54. **He will write a journal, or he will turn divine** : In case Pope refuses to help this Pitholeon, the latter will become a hack-writer to a politician or a clergyman. (He will either "contribute to the *London Journal*, a subsidised paper in favour of Walpole's government, or enter the Church, which in the eighteenth century was increasingly regarded as a profession instead of a vocation. It was against the general lack of sanctity in the clergy that some of Wesley's bitterest criticism came to be directed."

**Divine** : Clergyman skilled in theology.

55. **Packet** : a packet which contained the manuscript copy of a tragedy written by Barford.

'T is a stranger sucs : It is not a friend who asks for approval.

56. **A Virgin Tragedy, an Orphan Muse** : A play written on a virgin Queen with the Poetic Muse bereaved of her parents, (and hence cannot win the approval of Pope). Barford published *The Virgin Queen* in 1729. But he had already incurred the displeasure of Pope by the publication of his mock-heroic poem called *Assembly* wherein

Barford adopted Pope's fine machinery of sylphs (employed in *The Rape of the Lock*.)

57. **If I dislike it, etc.** : If I disapprove it, he will curse me to the utmost extent.
58. **If I approve, 'commend it to the Stage'** : In case I give my approval, then I will be asked to recommend it to be staged, using all my influence.
- 59-60. **There (thank my stars) my whole commission ends : The Play'rs and I are, luckily no friends** : Pope feels that his duty is done with his recommendation made, but fortunately for him, the actors and theatre-managers are not on friendly terms, and hence it was a failure on the stage. (In this context, it should be remembered that the original reading of the line is "Cibber and I are, luckily, no friends." Pope quarrelled with Cibber on a point concerning his own farce, *Three Hours After Marriage*, which failed miserably, when produced. Cibber was a poet and capable actor, but the quarrel prompted Pope to make him the mock-hero of his *Dunciad*. In the subsequent edition of the Epistle, the word *Cibber* was replaced by *Players*.)
61. **Fir'd that the house reject him** : enraged that the play should have failed on the stage. *House* refers to the audience in the theatre).  
**'Sdeath I'll print it** : taking an oath in the shortened form of God's death, the playwright swears that he would take his revenge by printing it.
62. **And shame the fools** : The disgruntled playwright thus proposes to shame the audience (in the theatre that has rejected him) by printing it.  
**Your interest, Sir with Lintot** : (Pope says indirectly that he is requested to exercise his influence in its publication by Lintot, the famous publisher and book-seller. Of course, Bernard Barnaby Lintot (1675-1736) published Pope's translation of Homer but quarrelled with him afterwards.
63. **Lintot, dull rogue** : (Pope calls him a dull rogue owing to the quarrel with him).

- Will think your price too much :** will consider the remuneration you demand as exorbitant.
64. **Not, Sir, if you revise and retouch :** This is the natural reply from his assailant visitor who insists that Lintot will agree if Pope undertakes to revise the work and give it finishing touches. It is curious that Pope's objections only increase his assailant's persistence.
65. **Demurs :** objections.  
**Double his attacks :** increase his persistent requests (which are good as attacks) by two-fold.
66. **Whispers :** says in a low tone (his willingness).  
**We go snacks :** we will share the money given by the publisher.
67. **Claps the door :** bangs the door.
68. (Vexed with the poetaster, Pope bangs the door on his face and turns him away, swearing that he has nothing to do with him or his works any more.)
69. **'Tis sung :** It is expressed in a poem.  
**Midas' Ears began to spring :** The ears of Midas (King of Phrygia) due to a curse from Apollo were changed to those of an ass. The King tried to hide the fact but in course of time the truth came out and was spread all over the world.
71. **His very minister who spy'd them first :** Pope says that the minister of Midas first discovered his master's ears, though the legend says it was the King's barber. According to another version it was the queen who found the truth and gave it out.
72. **Forc'd to speak or burst :** compelled to burst out the truth to others.
73. **And is not mine a sorer case :** is not my case worse ?
74. **When every coxcomb perks them in my face :** When every conceited poetaster flaunts his ass's ears impudently at me.
75. **Forbear :** be patient and have restraint.
77. **Keep close to Ears and those let asses prick :** Keep close to my ears and speak at whispers and let the asses (or

fools) prick their ears in curiosity to know the secret, but do not reveal it yourself.

78. **P. : Pope.**

**Nothing ?** : Pope interrupts Arbuthnot before the latter has finished.

**If they bite and kick ?** : Is it nothing when they torment Pope so much ?

79. **Out with it, Dunciad** : Pope apostrophises his general habit of exposing dunces.

**Dunciad** : Pope's mock-heroic poem written to satisfy the spite of the author against his enemies.

**Let the secret pass** : Let the secret circulate.

80. **That secret to each fool, that he is an ass** : That the signs of his folly are clearly visible ; let the secret that his ears are visible, pass on.

81-82. **The truth once told...the queen of Midas slept, and so may I** : The Queen got relief and slept only after she burst out the secret that Midas had the ears of an ass. So also, Pope expects relief and rest only after telling each fool the secret of his being an ass.

84. **No creature smarts so little as a fool** : ( *i.e.*, these poetasters are thick-skinned and insensitive to pain.)

85. **Peals of laughter** : Wild outburst of laughter.

**Codrus** : A name for an inept poetaster. Pope ridicules one Elkanah Settle (1648-1724).

86. **Thou unconcern'd canst hear the mighty crack** : You can remain as if it does not concern you, even though there is a loud outburst of laughter against you.

**The mighty crack** : The sudden sharp noise made.

87. **Pit, box and gallery in convulsions hurled** : the entire audience in the theatre were thrown into violent fits of laughter.

88. **Thou stand'st unshook** : you remain unshaken.

**Amidst a bursting world** : In the midst men rocking with laughter and mirth.

89. **Who shames a scribbler ?** : Who can put a mean poetaster to shame ? The implication is that none can wound his

feelings as he is thick-skinned. Codrus is thus an example of the stolidity of such inapt creatures. He is a shameless creature.

**Break one cobweb thro'** : If we break through one of his cobwebs.

90. **He spins the slight self-pleasing thread anew ?** : He renews his petty work with self-complacency, like the busy spider which spins another at once. (*Self-pleasing thread* refers to his shallow flimsy works which give him pleasure though they are disgusting to others )
91. **Flib** : despicable falsehood.  
**Sophistry** : fallacious reasoning.  
**In vain** : of no use (because nothing can humiliate him.)
93. **Thron'd** : seated.  
**Thin designs** : petty and flimsy works.
94. (Filled with pride for the amazingly lengthy writings though they are flimsy).
95. **Who have I hurt** : Have I really hurt the feelings of any one with my satire ?  
**Has poet yet or peer** : has any poet or peer.
96. **Lost the arch'd eye-brow or Parnassian sneer ?** : Lost his haughtiness or rudeness ?  
 (The point is that in spite of Pope's satire, no body was really hurt. The poets and peers continue their characteristic scorn and behave haughtily and rudely as ever).
97. **And has not Colley still his lord and whore** : Does not Colley Cibber continue to awe his patron or woman of easy virtues in spite of my satire against him ? Colley Cibber, 1671-1757, was an actor, playwright and part-proprietor of Drury Lane Theatre. He was Poet Laureate of England in 1730. Pope made him the hero of his Dunciad in the final edition. He was, of course, no great poet, but he was not a dullard as Pope depicts him to be.
98. **His Butchers Henley** : Has Henley lost the audience of butchers ? Henley was a famous orator of the time. Pope had a grouse against him for his public utter-

ances. Though he was a man of considerable poetic talent and real learning, Pope ridiculed his oratory in his *Dunciad*).

**His free-masons Moore?** Has Moore lost his free-masons (or members of a friendly benevolent society aiming at the promotion of social intercourse and exercise of charity.)

Note:—Warburton points out that Moore Smythe or James Moore was a member of the society of Free-masons. (See also note on line 24).

99. **Does not one table Bavius still admit:** Is not Bavius an honoured guest at one table even now? (It is not clear to whom Pope refers to by naming Bavius. It is the name of a poetaster sarcastically alluded to by Virgil. Here it may refer to any wretched poet, in general).
100. **- Still to one Bishop Philips seem a wit:** Does not Philips seem to be a wit to one Bishop, Bishop of Bristol? even though the former is a dullard. (Ambrose Philips was a writer of pastorals. His importance was established on account of Addison's friendship and Pope's enmity).
101. **Still Sappho:** Even now, Sappho (Pope is interrupted here at the mention of Sappho). Sappho was a famous poetess of the 7th century B. C., noted for her passionate energy. Pope gives the name Sappho to Lady Mary Wortley Montague (1689-1762), an English authoress best known for her lively and amusing letters. She quarrelled notoriously with Alexander Pope. She introduced small-pox inoculation into England.  
**A. Hold! for God's-sake you'll offend:** Dr. Arbuthnot interrupts his friend going on in that offensive strain and requests him to exercise restraint lest he should offend others.
102. **No names:** do not mention names.  
**Be calm:** be silent.  
**Learn prudence of a friend:** Learn my (Arbuthnot's) prudence (or discretion, sagacity or worldly-wisdom.)
103. **I too could write, and I am twice as tall:** (Arbuthnot says he also can write well and though he is twice as tall as, Pope, he does not offend people in an indiscreet manner).
104. **One flatt'rer's worse than all:** Pope answers that one

- flatterer is worse than all the enemies whom Arbuthnot exhorts Pope to be wary of.
- 105-6. **Of all mad creatures.....and not the bite :** If the learned men are right in what they say, it is the slaver (or spittle coming from the mouth, figuratively used for servile flattery) of a mad creature that causes greater harm than bite or slander or satire Pope means to say that flattery is more dangerous than slander.
107. **A fool quite angry is quite innocent :** A fool's anger is innocuous. It is not harmful at all.
108. **Alas 't is ten times worse when they repent :** It is a pity that when they (the fools) repent and turn flatterers, they turn ten times more dangerous.
109. **One dedicates in high heroic prose :** (Reference to the practice of writing dedications in pompous and flamboyant style.)
110. **And ridicules beyond a hundred foes :** and yet continues to ridicule in more poignant way than when hundred enemies combine.
111. **One from all Grub Street my fame defend :** A mean poetaster from the Grub Street defends me.
112. **And more abusive, calls himself my friend :** and calls himself my friend, but he brings greater abuse with it than any inhabitant of that street.
113. **This prints my letters :** This (contemptuous) fellow publishes my letters.  
(Curll published Pope's letters addressed to Henry Cromwell, without his permission. It is said that his correspondence was printed only with his knowledge, but Pope pretended to be greatly displeased. However, he published them himself later on, and avoided the ridicule of publishing them himself first.)  
**That expects a bribe :** That (contemptuous) fellow-another foolish repentant scribbler hopes to receive an offer of money for being friendly.
114. **And others roar aloud, 'Subscribe, subscribe' :** The other scribblers loudly clamour for subscriptions.  
(Pope now forgets the fact that he himself received subscriptions for the publication of his Homer and that he owes his prosperity to the subscriptions raised.)

The line throws light on his unfair and hypocritical nature.

115. (Pope now refers to the other flatterers who praise his person.)
116. **I cough like Horace, and tho' lean and short :** They flatter me by saying that I cough like the Roman poet, Horace, of the first century B.C. I am lean and short, (his seat had to be raised to bring it to the level of other seats), while Horace was stout and tall. But the flatterers ignore the fact and compare Pope to Horace, though it is not mentioned anywhere that the latter suffered from a cough.
117. **Ammon's great son one shoulder had too high :** The neck of Alexander the great, was inclined to his left shoulder. Pope had one of his shoulders very high. This was enough for the flatterers to compare him with Alexander who was regarded as the son of the Egyptian god, by name Ammon.
118. **Such Ovid's nose :** The flatterers go on comparing Pope's nose with that of Ovid, the Roman poet in the Augustan Age.  
  
**Sir you have an eye :** (The flatterer continues to praise Pope's eyes which are, no doubt, fine, sharp and piercing. Warburton considers that Pope hated flattery even when there was ground for commendation, but Mark Pattison remarks that Warburton missed the point of irony because Pope suffered from a complaint of the eyes. (Cf. Epistle to Bolingbroke.)
119. **Go on my obliging creatures :** (Pope asks his flatterers to proceed on with their flattery).  
**Make me see :** make me understand.
120. **All that disgrac'd my Betters, met in me :** that all these infirmities that have disgraced better men than, are culled and concentrated in me.
121. **Say for my comfort languishing in my bed :** When I am laid up in bed, suffering, you come and tell me for my comfort.
122. **'Just so immortal Maro held his head' :** that the Roman



poet, Maro or Virgil (with eternal fame) held his head exactly in that posture.

(Pope is able to see the ludicrousness of these compliments on his infirmities or deformities)

- 123-24. And when I die, be sure you let me know Great Homer dy'd three thousand years ago : (The praise of these flatterers would, no doubt, go to such a ridiculous extent, that they would not hesitate to say that at the time of his death, that Homer also died in the same manner as Pope.) The point is that though Homer belonged to 9th century B. C., the flatterers ridiculously say that he died only 3000 years ago.
125. Why did I write : (Pope now explains how he came to write poetry at all.)
126. What sin to me unknown Dipt me in ink, my parents', or my own : What sin my parents, or my own, not known to me, made me to write poetry ? (It is not a sin to write poetry whoever might be responsible for inducing him to write. But, as a satire is an offensive writing, Pope tries now to explain the circumstances which prompted him to write in a satirical way.)
127. As yet a child : Even when I was still a child.  
Nor yet a fool to fame : When I was not yet foolish to crave for reputation, *i.e.*, when he could not have any thoughts of fame as a poet.
128. I lisp'd in numbers : I wrote poetry.  
For numbers came : Poetry came to him with effortless ease. In other words, his utterances even as a child, were rhythmic, poetic and spontaneous.
129. I left no calling for this idle trade : I did not leave any other profession for this, *i.e.*, the idle profession of letters.
130. No duty broke : By taking to the profession of letters, I did not involve any breach of duty.  
No father disobey'd : I did not go against the desires of my father (In fact, his father encouraged him to write poetry).

131. **The Muse but serv'd to ease some friend, not Wife :** My poetic Muse catered only to give comfort to a friend and not to his wife.  
(It is to be noted that Pope remained unmarried throughout his life, and hence this part of the statement is correct.)
132. **To help me thro' this long disease, my Life :** (Pope did not enjoy any health for four days continuously. Verily, his life was long disease. Poetry offered him the greatest solace in all his sufferings.)
133. **To second, Arbuthnot :** (Poetry preserved him. It supplemented Arbuthnot's art and care.)  
**Thy Art and care :** your medical proficiency, protection and comforting companionship.
134. **And teach the Being you preserv'd, to bear :** The poetic Muse (line 131) only served to teach him (whose life Arbuthnot preserved) to bear or put up with the hard realities of life.
135. **But why then publish :** (If Pope's poems were intended merely to solace himself and his friends, where was the need for their publication ?) The answer is given in the succeeding lines.  
**Granville :** George Granville, (1667-1735) (later on became Lord Lansdowne) a poet and wit of Queen Anne's time. He was an ardent admirer of Pope. Pope dedicated his *Windsor Forest* to him. He was grateful to Granville because the latter declared that he found in Pope another Virgil.
136. **And knowing Walsh :** William Walsh ( 1663-1708 ), a country gentleman of fortune and fashion and who dabbled in poetry after the manner of Waller. He was regarded by Dryden as the best critic of his age, and hence Pope calls him *knowing Walsh*.  
**Would tell me I could write :** found promise in my work and encouraged me to write.
137. **Well-natur'd Garth :** Sir Samuel Garth, M. D. (1671-1719), a poet and physician of a sweet disposition. (He encouraged Pope to write Pastorals.)  
**Inflamed :** encouraged (me.)  
**With early praise :** with the earliest encouragement.

138. **Congreve** : William Congreve (1670-1729) a celebrated dramatist of the time. He wrote a series of comedies. He took the trouble of reading Pope's earlier works and offered his suggestions for improvement. He encouraged Pope to continue his literary efforts. Pope dedicated his translation of *Homer's Iliad* to him.

**Swift** : Jonathan Swift (1667-1745) the famous author of *Gulliver's Travels*. He encouraged Pope to continue the translation of *Homer's Iliad* and obtained for him a subscription list of 'unprecedented length and splendour.' Pope showed his gratitude to him by dedicating his *Dunciad*.

**Endured my lays** : tolerated my songs or poems. (It should be noted that endurance on the part of Swift meant lavish praise from others.)

139. **The courtly Talbot** : Charles Talbot, Duke of Shrewsbury (1660-1718). He encouraged Pope to poetise Donne's satires.

**Somers** : Lord John Somers. "A faithful, able and incorrupt minister who to the qualities of a consummate statesman, added those of a man of learning and politeness."

**Sheffield** : John Sheffield, (1648-1712) Duke of Buckingham. He was Dryden's patron and Pope's friend.

**Read** : condescended or took the trouble of reading Pope's poems.

140. **Even mitred Rochester** : Even Francis Atterbury, Bishop of Rochester, wearing a tall cap, deeply cleft at top, which is a symbol of episcopal office.

**Would nod the head** : (In approval of Pope's earliest efforts.)

141. **St. John's self** : Henry St. John, first Viscount of Bolingbroke. He was a brilliant Tory statesman and powerful orator.

142. **With open arms receiv'd one Poet, more** : welcomed Pope with open arms or enthusiasm, having already received Dryden.

143. **Happy my studies, when by these approved** : I am fortunate in my poetic efforts because they have the approval of these great men.

144. **Happier their author, when by these beloved :** I am more fortunate because I could not only get their approval but win their love as well.
145. **From these the world will judge of men and books :** The judgment of the world on men and books will depend on the opinion of the great men referred to above.
146. **Not from the Burnets, Oldmixons and Cookes :** The judgment of the world shall not be guided by the opinion of Burnets, Oldmixons and Cookes. (Proper names are used here to represent types of men. The figure of speech is Synecdoche. According to Pope, all the three authors belong to the same class of secret and scandalous history, though, in fact, Bishop Burnet was not of such inferior calibre as the other two.)  
**Burnet :** Gilbert Burnet (1643-1715) Bishop of Salisbury, a historian and author.  
**Oldmixon :** (In the language of Pope, he was a perverter of history.)  
**Cooke :** May be Roger Cooke (an author) or Thomas Cooke. Pope spelt it as Cook. (In this line, Pope drives home his point that the world will not form its judgment of men and books based upon the opinions of inferior writers like Burnets, Oldmixons and Cookes.)
147. **Soft were my numbers :** My versification was felicitous.
- 147-48 **Who could take offence while pure Description held the place of Sense ? :** Who could find fault with my versification when my works (like *Pastorals* and *Windsor Forest*) were purely descriptive and without greater attention to thought and meaning ?
149. **Like gentle Fanny's was my flowery theme :** Like Lord John Hervey (1696-1743) who was a supple politician and fine parliamentarian, I gave my themes of the earlier poems a flowery style though they lacked substance.
150. **A painted mistress or a purling stream :** (Reference to the two poems *The Rape of the Lock* and the *Windsor Forest*. The painted mistress is Belinda in her toilet and the purling stream is the river Thames, whirling and babbling.)
151. **And then did Gildon draw his venal quill :** And then Charles Gildon (1665-1724), an industrious hack-writer

- drew his mercenary pen and attacked him scandalously. (According to Pope Addison paid Gildon ten pounds for writing a satirical pamphlet against him.)
152. (I kept quiet and even invited him to a dinner.)
153. Yet then did Dennis rave in furious fret : Yet John Dennis (1657-1734) a critic who could not attain literary success roared like a mad men in a fit of anger. (Dennis called Pope 'a stupid, impudent, hunch-backed toad'. Dennis quarrelled with many ; and he attacked against Addison's *Cato*.)
154. I never answered : (Pope was giving a falsehood here, because he did not keep quiet. He retaliated him in an anonymous pamphlet and took his revenge.)
156. I wag'd no war with Bedlam or the Mint : I did not wage a war with lunatics or beggars.
157. If wrong : If the criticism made against him by any *sober critic* (of the previous line) is wrong.  
I smil'd : I simply smiled and kept quiet. (It is strange that Pope makes such a statement, because tolerance has been never his virtue)  
If right, I kiss'd the rod : (If the *sober critic* was right in his judgment, Pope says he bowed to it meekly and accepted it.) This is also far from the truth.
159. Just pretence : proper claims.
160. And all they want is spirit taste and sense : (Pope says that though his critics are painstaking, learned and studious, they woefully lack spirit, taste and sense.)
161. Comma's and points they set exactly right : They can insert commas and full-stops at the right places.
162. 'Twere a sin to rob them of their mite : It would be criminal to deprive them of the fun or satisfaction they derive, by the insertion of such punctuation marks.  
Mite : modest contribution.
163. One sprig of laurel : one small emblem of distinction in poetry.  
Grac'd : Adorned.  
These ribalds : These critics indulging in irreverent jests and scurrilous language.

164. **From slashing Bentley down to pidling Tibalds :** All these critics ranging from Richard Bentley (1662-1742) to Lewis Theobald (1688-1744.)

*Note* :— Bentley was a great English classical scholar who won Pope's enmity by his uncomplimentary remarks on his Homer. Theobald was a Shakespearean commentator who also incurred the displeasure of Pope by pointing the errors committed by him in his edition of Shakespeare. Pope describes the one as slashing or making sweeping condemnation, and the other as pidling or working in a trifling way.

165. **Each wight :** each of the critics from Bentley to Theobald.

**Who reads not :** who does not read and understand the spirit of the passage.

**But scans and spells :** but is concerned only with details regarding scansion and spelling.

166. **Word-catcher :** (A contemptuous term for the critic whose chief concern is the word, its scansion and spelling.)

**That lives on syllables :** who concerns himself with the accents of the syllables (in each metrical foot.)

167. **Some regard may claim :** may claim some regard or respect.

168. **Preserv'd in Milton's or Shakespeare's name :** (Those critics get some regard as their names are preserved or kept alive, for having been associated with immortal poets like Milton or Shakespeare.) It is to be noted that Bentley edited Milton's *Paradise Lost* (1732.). As an editor, "emendations were at once Bentley's forte and foible." Again, Theobald published his *Shakespeare Restored* exposing Pope's incapacity as a critic. Therefore Pope hated both of them and considered them as critics of no value. If they are remembered even today, it is due to the illustrious poets on whom they wrote.

- 169-70. (These critics preserved in others' names are as good or as bad as the forms of hairs or straws or dirt or worms in yellowish fossil resin, used for ornaments.)

171. **The things :** (The things listed above.)
172. **But wonder how the devil they got there :** One wonders how they managed to get at Milton or Shakespeare.
174. **Well might they rage :** They might be very well angry.  
**I gave them but their due :** I gave them only what they deserved. (The point is what Pope thinks to be their deserts, might not after all be what they thought, they deserved.)
175. (It is not after all difficult to find out the real worth of a man.)
176. **But each man's secret standard in his mind**  
 has his own secret measure of finding out it.
177. **That casting-weight Pride :** that final factor in his own qualities.  
**Adds to Emptiness :** adds to his worthlessness.
178. **This who can gratify ? Who can satisfy this—the proud man's vanity ?**  
**Guess :** know (what the proud man thinks to be his deserts.)
179. **The Bard :** The poet (referring to Ambrose Philips.)  
**Whom pilfer'd Pastorals renowns :** Whom the stolen Pastorals made famous. (Here Pope accuses Ambrose Philips with the charge of plagiarism. Mark Pattison remarks : "The charge of plagiarism, which Pope here brings against Ambrose Philips, he had fasten'd on him more than twenty years before. Pope sent to the *Guardian* (April 27, 1713) an ironical comparison of his own Pastorals with those of Philips, in which he affected to give the preference to his rival. In this he said that Philips's pastorals gave manifest proof of his knowledge of books. But Philips's ideas were no further pilfered than that they were the stock-in-trade of all pastoral writers. Philips's Pastorals were a professed imitation of Spenser, as Pope's were of Virgil, and as Virgil's had been of a Theocritus.")
180. **Who turns a Persian tale for half a crown :** who writes a Persian story in English for a half-crown. (Ambrose Philips translated a book called *Persian Tales* for each section of which Philips received a remuneration of half

a crown. It was a liberal payment, no doubt, but Pope's phrase has an odious sound about it.)

181. **Barrenness** : emptiness.
182. **Strains** : exerts.  
**From hard bound brains** : from dull intellect.  
**Eight lines a year** : (A bitter attack on Philips's poverty of expression.)
183. **Still wanting** : always lacking in something.  
**Tho' he lives on theft** : though he lives on plagiarism.
- 185-86. (His poetry is a mixture of sense and non-sense. He does not understand properly and hence makes gross mistakes.)
187. **Fustian** : bombastic style.  
**Sublimely bad** : worst.
188. **It is not poetry but prose run mad** : It is prose run amuck ; it cannot be called poetry ; it may be described as frenzied prose.
189. **All these, my modest Satire bade translate** : All these made me direct my satire at the Translations.
190. **And own'd that nine such Poets made a Tate** : And admitted that such nine poets were equivalent to Nahum Tate, because he was the author of most of the translations. (Mark Pattison observes : "Pope's sneers at the translators as an inferior species inevitably remind us, that his own fortune and position had been secured by a translation of Homer, which he had sublet to several hands." Nahum Tate was Poet Laureate (1692-1715.)
- 191-92. (When I aimed my satire at the Translations, the Translators became furious and swore that even the great Addison was not safe from my attacks.)
193. **Peace to all such !** ; Let these poets or translators have peace.
- 193-94. (But there is one poet whose poetic fire is kindled by genius and inspired by fame) *i.e.*, he is a genuine poet.
197. **Too fond to rule alone** : excessively fond of enjoying exclusive rights and privileges.



198. (He could never tolerate a rival poet, like a Turkish Sultan who cannot tolerate a near relative lest there should be palace intrigues.)

According to Mark Pattison, Pope adapts this line from *Denham* :—

*"Nor needs thy juster title the foul gilt  
Of Eastern Kings, who to secure their reign,  
Must have their brothers, sons and kindred slain."*

199. **View him with scornful yet with jealous eyes :** Addison looks at him (the rival poet or the brother near the throne) with real jealousy and pretended scorn.
200. **And hate for arts that caus'd himself to rise :** Addison (this genuine poet) hates his rival (if he was achieving success and becoming famous) for employing the same means or tricks which helped him to rise in life.
201. **Damn with faint praise :** condemns with cold and meagre praise.

**Assent with civil leer :** gives approval (of his rival's work) with a polite but sly side-long look. (In the language of Mark Pattison, "Addison had one habit which both Swift and Stella applauded, and which we hardly know how to blame. If his first attempts to set a presuming dunce right were ill-received, he changed his tone, assented with civil leer, and lured the flattered coxcomb deeper and deeper into absurdity.")

202. **And without sneering, teach the rest to sneer :** without himself sneering openly at a thing Addison teaches others to sneer at it, by subtle insinuation or sly suggestion. (This is indeed a wonderful trait in Addison's character.)
203. **Willing to wound, and yet afraid to strike :** (This line has a proverbial ring about it. Pope means to say that Addison is a coward to strike at his enemies in an open manner. But he is willing enough to offend their feelings, though with polite sneering.)
204. **Just hint a fault and hesitate dislike :** (It is the habit of this one genuine poet, to slyly point out others' faults, but always fighting shy of declaring his dislike in a manly and open way.)

205. **Alike reserv'd to blame, or to commend :** He is further cautious enough not to venture a praise or censure of his rival's works.
206. **A timorous foe and a suspicious friend :** He was a coward as an enemy and suspicious as a friend. (Normally, one should be courageous as an enemy and trustful as a friend. But Addison was strangely both timid and suspicious and therefore he is not fit either to be an enemy or a friend.)
207. **Dreading ev'n fools :** fearing even unworthy fellows.  
**By Flatterers besieged :** surrounded by sycophants.
208. **And so obliging that he never obliged :** He appeared to be showing superficial courtesy and readiness to help, but never helped any. (Macaulay's commentary on this passage is both interesting and illuminating. He says : "It is not merely unjust, but ridiculous to describe a man who made the fortunes of every one of his intimate friends, as *so obliging that he never obliged*".)
- 209-10. **Like Cato give his little Senate laws :** Like Marcus Porcius Cato, (96-45 B.C.) a man of unbending character, absolute integrity, and a supporter of Pompey, he *i.e.*, Addison formulated his principles to the small group of his flatterers.
210. **And sit attentive to his own applause :** and sit bemused with praises. (It should be noted in this context, that Addison wrote a tragedy, *Cato*, dealing with Cato's stand and death at Utica, after Pompey's defeat by Caesar, and praise of that work was pleasing to Addison.)
211. **Wits :** wise men.  
**Templars :** lawyers.  
**Ev'ry sentence raise :** applaud or cheer with an opinion or conclusion.
212. **Wonder with :** be astonished with.  
**A foolish face of praise :** a foolish flatterer or sycophant.
213. **Who must laugh, if such a man there be ? :** We laugh if there is really such a person with the above characteristics, at all.

214. **Who would not weep, if Atticus were he :** Every one will weep when he is told that the person with the above description, is no other than Atticus. The original of this character, (Atticus, was a wealthy Roman and friend of Cicero. He was the most elegant and finished scholar of the Romans. Alexander Pope called Joseph Addison as "the English Atticus in a keen but biting satire on the personal characteristics of the famous essayist." Elvin and Courthope say that "the name, Atticus, had already been appropriated to Addison, in *The Spectator*, No. 150.")

*Note :—*These lines (193-214) first appeared in a Miscellany in 1723 but were later reprinted in 1727. They were altered to a great extent and made to appear in this Epistle, in the present form (1735). These lines form the most famous passage in the Epistle and Mark Pattison is all appreciation for it. He says : "These celebrated lines are at once a master-piece of Pope's skill as a poet, and his base disposition as a man. They unite the most exquisite finish of sarcastic expression with the venomous malignity of personal rancour. They have less of antithesis and epigram than the character of Wharton or the Duchess of Marlborough, and therefore more reality. Pope felt every stab, and gratified his temper by the pain he inflicted. The lines were not published till Addison had been dead eight years. They appeared first as a fragment in the Miscellanies of 1727, but they were finished as early as 1716, when according to Spence, they had been sent by Pope to Addison himself. Pope had meditated each point for years, as the germs of some of them appear in a prose letter to Craggs in 1715. In the first copy in 1727, the name was given—Addison. The substitution of Atticus in 1735 may perhaps be an indication that Pope was not without some sense of outrage he was committing. The supposed provocation was a project for a rival—whig—translation of Homer, the suggestion of which Pope attributed to Addison."

- 215-16. **What tho' my Name stood rubric....in capitals ? : What does it matter if my name appears painted red on posters**

or hand bills fixed to the walls and pillars in bold letters ?

**Plastered :** plastered.

**With claps :** with posters in advertisement of cures for venereal diseases.

217. **Or smoking forth, a hundred hawkers' load :** or what does it matter if scurrilous literature smokes forth (comes out fresh from the press) in a large quantity enough to be carried and distributed by a hundred hawkers ?
218. **On wings of winds came flying all abroad :** (Referring to the scurrilous pamphlets and poems whose circulation takes place rapidly as though by the wings of winds) *i.e.*, they are scattered and distributed everywhere because the hawkers sold them like hot cakes.
219. **I sought no homage from the race :** I was not anxious to get tribute or praise from the tribe of authors.
220. **I kept, like Asian Monarchs, from their sight :** I maintained the dignity (that right) of being aloof from them like the Asian rulers who keep themselves in seclusion to maintain dignity.
- 221-22. **Poems I heeded (now be-rhym'd so long) no more than thou, great George ! a birth-day song :** I cared for the poems with as much attention as King George II did for the songs written in honour of his birth-day. (The King did not like poetry at all. He hated all poets and painters as his father did. He felt it an infliction to listen to the ode from the poet laureate, written on the occasion of his birth-day. Here Pope makes a sarcastic reference to George's contempt for poetry and says that he too cherished the same attitude towards the scribblers, because he had been suffering from a surfeit of poems.)
223. **I nev'r with wits or wittings pass'd my days :** I never spent my time in the company of petty wits or poetasters.
224. **To spread about the itch of verse and praise :** to spread the contagion of flattering verses.
225. **Puppy :** young dog ; vain, empty-headed young man.

**Daggled thro' the town :** moved up and down the town. (A contemptuous expression for a mean person who moves up and down the town.)

226. **To fetch and carry sing-song up and down :** to carry about scandals and anecdotes from one place to another. (These lines are supposed to have reference to Savage who was very familiar with the town authors and therefore could secretly supply to Pope with scandalous anecdotes about those authors.)

227. **Rehearsals :** The rehearsals conducted before staging a play. (There is also a sly reference to Cibber's play called *The Rehearsal*.)

**Mouthed :** uttered (in a dramatic way.)

**Cry'd :** shouted, said loudly.

228. **With handkerchief :** to wipe out the *sweat* in the previous line.

**Orange :** (to moisten their hoarse throats.)

- 227-28. (Pope means to say that he was no play-wright and hence there was no need for him to shout at the Rehearsals, or to wipe out with a handkerchief the sweat coming out of his forehead, or to put an orange in his mouth to moisten the throat that becomes hoarse on account of frequent shouting.)

229. **But sick of fops, and poetry, and prate :** being sick of dandies or vain men, the poetry of the mean scribblers and the idle talk of these authors.

230. **To Bufo left the whole Castalian state :** I left the whole Castation spring (which is a spring on the Mount Parnassus, sacred to the Muses and whose water is supposed to inspire men with gift of poetry) to 'Bufo or Charles Montague, Earl of Halifax.

*Note :—*Pope means to say that he had left the whole realm of poetry to the popular patron of literature, namely Lord Halifax. Once Pope read his *Homer* to Halifax, and after listening to Pope, the Lord suggested that a certain passage required re-touching or improvement. Pope was rather puzzled and went home. But after some time, following Garth's advice, read the same passage to Halifax without any alteration. The great patron, curiously enough, declared the passage to be perfectly

right and nothing could be better ! This small incident perhaps suggested to Pope the real character of Halifax. The tradition is that the passage refers to Halifax and Pattison says that there is no reason for doubting it. Macaulay points out "the seeming puzzle that a man who loved literature passionately, and rewarded literary merit munificently, should have been more savagely reviled both in prose and verse than almost any politician in our history." Pope, though pictures him as Bufo, yet wrote of him as "a peer, no less distinguished by his love of letters, than by his abilities in Parliament", a statement which is consistent with the present character, even a stratagem of concealment.

231. **Apollo** : One of the great gods of Olympus, typifying the Sun in its light and life-giving as well as in its destroying power. His abode is on Mount Parnassus and he is considered to be the Presiding deity over music, poetry and the healing art. He is also represented in art as the perfection of youthful manhood. He is the son of the most supreme Olympion God, namely, Zeus.  
**On his forked hill** : on one of the two summits of Mt. Parnassus.
232. **Sate** : sat.  
**Full-blown Bufo** : highly developed or brilliant Halifax.  
**Puff'd by ev'ry quill** : flattered by all types of writers (who were in need of his patronage.)
233. **Fed by soft Dedication all day long** : nourished by the pleasing dedications of poets throughout the day. (Here Pope ridicules Halifax's ardent desire to be pleased to have ever so many dedications of books from the needy poets who sought his patronage. It is said that Halifax wanted Pope to dedicate his *Homer* to him, but Pope "sent a cool answer, and the negotiation passed off", because Pope was less eager for money than Halifax was eager for praise.)
234. **Horace** : The great Roman lyricist and satirist (65-8 B. C.)  
**And he** : and Bufo (Halifax.)  
**Went hand in hand with song** : (Halifax began to consider that he was as great as Horace.)

235. **His Library :** (Bufo's Library of books.)  
**Busts :** statue (a headless trunk.)  
**Stood :** exhibited. (Here is a reference to the affectation of antiquarians who generally exhibited the headless trunks of statues of poet like Homer and Pindar and philosophers like Plato, in their library halls.)
236. **And a true Pindar stood without a head :** The headless statue of Pindar was exhibited there. [Pindar was the most famous lyric poet of Greece (522-422 B. C.) Pope probably means to suggest that Lord Halifax himself was Pindar, without head.]
237. **Receiv'd of wits an undistinguish'd race :** he received praise from these undistinguished scribblers.
238. **Who first his judgment asked, and then a place :** who first solicited his opinion regarding their works and afterwards an employment.
239. **Much they extoll'd his pictures :** they lavishly praised the pictures he collected (Halifax was an art connoisseur.)  
**Much his seat :** They also praised Halifax's country mansion (with parks etc.) equally highly.
240. **And flatter'd every day :** and there was incessant flattery heaped on him daily.  
**And some days eat :** on some days they were able to get dinner (on account of their flattery.)
241. **Till grown frugal in his riper days :** till he became economical in his more mature age. (In other words, he stinted giving them anything for their flattery.)  
**Frugal :** economical.
242. **He paid some bards with port :** he offered Port wine to some poets.  
**And some with praise :** and only words praise to others (because kind words cost little.)
243. **To some a dry rehearsal was assigned :** Halifax gave to some others only a dry exercise of rehearsing or reading aloud their pieces to him, without offering drink to moisten their throat, which became dry in the course of exercise.

**Was assigned :** was given.

244. **And others (harder still) he paid in kind :** to others, the position is much worse, because he paid in kind, *i.e.*, verses for verses, and forced them to sit and listen to his works almost for an equal length of time they took for rehearsing their poems.
245. **Dryden alone came not nigh :** Dryden only did not join the flatterers.

*Note* :—Dryden (1631-1700) was an outstanding figure in letters during the Restoration period and literary dictator of his age. He was a poet, dramatist and critic. His poetry shows the characteristic restraint and finish of *Neo-Classicism*. His prose is lucid and simple, and he established the heroic couplet as the vehicle for satire and didactic poetry for the next century."

**What wonder :** Is it surprising ? (Pope means to say that there is nothing surprising about Dryden's scorn for these flattering poetasters who seek the patronage of Halifax. Dryden was indeed unique in hating to join these poetasters toadying on Bufo. But, we know that Dryden belonged to the opposite party of Halifax, both in politics and religion.)

246. **Dryden alone escap'd this judging eye :** (Pope says that Dryden alone escaped the unpleasant criticism because he was spared.

**Escaped :** got off safely from or avoided the unpleasant criticism of his works.

247. **The Great have kindness in reserve :** The great men (ironical) have some innate goodness kept in reserve.
248. **He help'd to bury whom he help'd to starve :** Therefore, Lord Halifax gave a grand funeral to those whom he starved without help) during their life-time. (It is interesting to note in this connexion that Dryden always lived in great exigencies, and Halifax did not help him in any way. But as he (Halifax) has some goodness kept in reserve, (as Pope ironically points out) he offered to pay the expenses of Dryden's funeral, say £ 500 for a monument. The Kit-Cat-Club members also contributed towards the expenses of Dryden's funeral.)



249. **Some choice patron :** some selected patron.  
**Bless :** shower his blessings with his patronage.  
**Each gray goose-quill :** each poetaster.
250. **Bavius :** (See note on line 29.)  
**Bufo :** Lord Halifax *i.e.*, patron.  
**Still :** always.
251. **Statesman :** person taking prominent part in the management of state affairs.  
**Wants a day's defence :** wants to draw up his defence for the day.
252. **Or Envy holds a whole week's war with Sense :** or when envious people make war with Sense.
253. **Or simple pride for flatt'ry makes demands :** or when proud people expect flattery from others.
254. **May dunce by dunce be whistled off my hands ! :** May these dunces, one after one, be drawn (towards the envious and proud people or statesmen in need of defence) to satisfy their demands, and thereby relieve Pope from botheration.  
**Whistled off :** drawn off. (Pope considers it a good riddance if these dunces flock round the statesmen or the envious and proud people to cater to their needs.)
255. **Blest be the Great ! :** Let those great men (statesmen etc.) be blessed by God for taking away the dunces from him (Pope.)  
**For those they take away :** considering the type of men whom they (the Great) take away from me.
256. **And those they left me :** and considering the quality of men, they left to me (let them be blessed.) This is a parody from the scripture.  
**For they left me Gay :** Left John Gay (1658-1732), (the author of several popular Fables and the most successful *Beggar's Opera*) to be my friend.
257. **Left me to see neglected Genius bloom :** put me in the unhappy position seeing Gay (who was a neglected genius, according to Pope.)

**Note** :—Gay was one of Pope's dearest friends. Pope wrote to Spence how Gay was neglected. "He dangled for twenty years about a court, and at last was offered to be made usher to the young princess. Secretary Gragg made Gay a present of stock in South Sea Bubble ; and he was once worth £ 20,000 ; but lost it all again. He got about £ 500 by the first *Beggar's Opera* and £ 1100 or £ 1200 by the second. He was negligent and a bad manager. Later on, the Duke of Queensbury took his money into his keeping, and let him only have what was necessary out of it ; and as he lived with them, he could not have occasion much. He died worth upwards of £ 3000."

258. **Neglected die** : (It is given to me to see) him die in a neglected condition.

**And tell it on his tomb** : and to write an inscription on Gay's tomb.

Pope's epitaph runs as follows :

*"Of Manners gentle, of Affections mild ;  
In wit, a man ; in simplicity, a child ;  
With native Humour temp'ring Virtuous Rage,  
Form'd to delight at once and lash the age ;  
Above temptation, in a low Estate,  
And uncorrupted, ev'n among the Great ;  
A safe Companion, and an Easy friend,  
Unblam'd thro' life, lamented in thy end,  
These are thy Honours ! not that here thy bust,  
Is mixed with Heroes, or with Kings thy dust ;  
But that the Worthy and the Good shall say,  
Striking their pensive bosoms—Here lies Gay."*

259. **Of all thy blameless life** : of all your life without any blemish.

**The sole return** : the only reward.

260. **My verse** : my epitaph.

**And Queensbury's weeping** : The lamentation of the Duke and Duchess of Queensbury (who erected a costly monument to Gay's memory in Westminster Abbey.)

**Over thy urn** : Over your tomb (urn is a vessel in which ashes are kept.)

261. **Oh let me live my own, and die so too ! :** Addressing his tormentors, (Pope wishes that he may also be allowed to live his own life in his own way and also to die in the same way.)
262. **To live and die is all I have to do :** (This is the final philosophy of every man. Mark Pattison says that Pope borrowed this line from Denham.
263. **Maintain a Poet's dignity and ease :** Let me keep up the status and happiness of a poet.
265. **Above a Patron :** Let me be beyond the need of having a patron or let me be too proud to have one.  
**Tho' I condescend :** Though I come down (Pope uses this word to show his pride equal to that of a statesman of the country.)
266. **Sometimes :** occasionally.  
**To call a minister my friend :** to count a minister among my friends. (It is not made clear who this minister-friend his was.)
267. **I was not born for Courts or great affairs :** I am not fit to be in a court or to manage important political problems.
268. **I pay my debts :** I clear my debts.  
**Believe :** believe in God.  
**And say my pray'rs :** offer my daily prayers (because I believe in God.)
269. **Can sleep without a Poem in my head :** can sleep well without being disturbed by thoughts of poetic composition.
270. **Nor know, if Dennis be alive or dead :** I do not care to know if my enemy Dennis (see note on line No. 153) is alive or dead. Pope says that he is absolutely indifferent to the fortunes of his foes.
271. **Why am I ask'd what next shall see the light ? :** Why am I asked what shall be my next poem ? (Pope means to to say that he is not very much bothered with such a question.)
272. **Was I born for nothing but to write ? :** Is the sole purpose of my creation, nothing but writing poetry?
273. **Has Life no joys for me ?** Have I no pleasures to enjoy in life ?

**To be grave :** to be more serious.

274. **Have I no friend to serve ? :** have I no friends to be useful to ?  
**No soul to save :** need not I look after my spiritual salvation.
275. **I found him close with Swift :** This is what Balbus cries, *i.e.*, that he found Pope in close intimacy with Swift.
276. **Prating Balbus :** A talkative person or one who simply prattles or blabs out. (The original of Balbus is a character taken from Cicero's dialogues.)  
**Something will come out :** The talkative Balbus will circulate the rumour that Pope has been contemplating his next poem because he is found closeted with Swift.
277. **'Tis all in vain :** It is absolutely useless.  
**Deny it as I will :** Even though I deny all such rumours in the strongest way possible.
278. **No, such a Genius never can lie still :** Pope says in a self-complacent manner that such a genius as himself can never tell falsehood.
- 279-80. (Then Sir William Yonge, (a staunch supporter of Walpole) or Bubo Doddington or Lord Malcombe writes a lampoon or scurrilous piece of satire, which is mistaken to be written by me, *obligingly* for me (ironical).  
 The prose order is : "And then mistakes the first Lampoon Sir Will or Bubo makes for mine.  
**Mistakes :** ascribes.
280. **Sir Will :** (Sir William Yonge was Secretary for War during 1732-46. He was regarded as "a great liar but rather a mean than a vicious one. He was good-natured, good-humoured, never offensive in company, nobody's friend, nobody's enemy.....He had a great command of Parliamentary language and a talent of talking eloquently without meaning, and expatiating agreeably on nothing.)  
**Bubo :** (Bubo Doddington or Lord Malcombe was a confidential adviser to Frederick, Prince of Wales. He was also an author of a well-known Diary. A. W. Ward says : "He is a character typical in many respects of his age. Utterly unconscientious and cheerfully blind to his unconscientiousness, and a liberal rather than discriminating patron of literary men.)

281. **Poor guiltless I ! and can I choose but smile :** I, being an innocent person, chose only to keep quiet and smile and never to retaliate by writing a similar lampoon.
282. **When ev'ry Coxcomb knows me by my Style :** When every conceited person claims to recognise my authorship by my style. (Pope's charge is that every coxcomb attributes the authorship of such a scurrilous lampoon to himself, taking into consideration the style in which it was written, probably similar to his.)
283. **Curst be the verse, how well soe'er it flow :** May the verse of the lampoon whatever its felicity be, cursed.
284. **That tends to make one worthy man my foe :** that which makes one worthy person my enemy.
285. **Give Virtue scandal, Innocence a fear :** If that verse scandalises the virtuous people and causes fear in the minds of innocent men.
286. **Or from the soft-eyed Virgin steal a tear :** or if that verse causes pain to tender-eyed or innocent girl, and makes her shed tears.
287. **He :** that person.  
**Who hurts a harmless neighbour's peace :** who offends an innocent neighbour by disturbing his peace with his lampoons.
288. **Insults fall'n worth :** who insults worthy people in their misfortunes or fall.  
**Or Beauty in distress :** or who insults damsels in distress.
289. **Who loves a Lie :** that person who loves falsehood.  
**Lame Slander helps about :** who helps spreading slander in a slow and surreptitious way.
290. **Who writes a Libel :** who writes a scurrilous attack.  
**Or who copies out :** or who simply copies out those scandals by repeating them to others. (Pope is referring to those persons who, though they do not write libels, do a great deal for spreading them.)
291. **That Fop :** i.e., he in line 287 that dandy or exquisitely vain man.  
**Affects :** desires.  
**Whose pride affects a p<sup>r</sup>son's name :** whose vanity

desires the good reputation of a patron, because he takes pride in being known as a patron.

292. **Yet absent, wounds an author's honest fame :** This dandy defames the author of his fair reputation, in his absence.
293. **Who can your merit selfishly approve :** Such a dandy who approves the work of a poet only with the selfish motive of himself becoming a *famous critic*.
294. **And show the sense of it without the love :** who tries to show to the world the merits of a poetical work, without any genuine love for doing so.
295. **Who has the vanity to call your friend :** Such a fop calls one a friend, with a false sense of pride.
296. **Yet wants the honour, injured, to defend :** Yet this dandy-critic lacks the good sense of defending his poet-friend's honour, when it is at stake or injured by some enemy. (Pope is probably referring to his false friends, who claim his friendship but lack the virtue of defending him when he is attacked.)
297. **Who tells whate'er you think, whate'er you say :** That false friend does not have the good sense of keeping your secret thoughts and utterances but reveals them to others.
298. **And if he lie not :** if he is to be considered as not telling falsehood.
- Must at least betray :** must be regarded as betraying or deceiving Pope, by exposing his secrets to others.
299. **Who to the Dean, and silver bell can swear :** Pope asks, "who can swear that the Dean and the silver bell described in *Moral Essays IV*, were intended to ridicule the Dean and silver bell in Canons, the Duke's mansion ?"

**Note :—**The reference here is to the description of Timon's Villa in the fourth *Moral Essay*. Pope intended this Villa to be Canons (the name of the costly mansion of the Duke of Chandos, built at a cost of £ 200,000. Alexander Pope desired that this description should be regarded as purely imaginary. But it is impossible to doubt his intentions. Pope's denial is a part of his technique. It is aptly described by Mr. Carruthers in the following lines : "To equivocate genteelly, as he

termed it, or to deny firmly, as circumstances might require, were expedients he never hesitated to adopt. Imaginary details being generally worked in his pictures, he could always quibble, and deny part with truth." Dr. Johnson's remarks on the point under reference, are indeed interesting and illuminating. He says: "From the reproach, with an attack on a character so amiable, brought on him, he (Pope) tried all means of escaping. He was at last reduced to shelter his temerity behind dissimulation. He wrote an exculpatory letter to the Duke, which was answered with great magnanimity, as by a man who accepted his excuse without believing his professions."

300. **And sees at Canons what was never there :** Who can believe that he sees at Canons or the mansion of Chandos, what was not actually there. In other words, one can get an imaginary and poetic picture of the mansion, without any actual bearing, (from Pope's description of the Villa.)

*Note* :—Pope goes back from his original stand or intention. This *going-back* it is correctly pointed out, is a part of Pope's nature.

301. **Who reads, but with a lust to misapply :** only with a passion for wrong application, he, while reading a poem.
302. **Make Satire a Lampoon, and Fiction, Lie :** (Degrades satire to the level of a lampoon and fiction to that of falsehood; *i.e.*, he declares it as a scurrilous attack against individuals while it is only a general satire against a type. He also declares an imaginary description as a deliberate falsehood. (Here Pope complains against those people who cause him trouble by their best for wrong application.)
303. **A lash like mine :** an attack like mine.  
**No honest man shall dread :** no honest man shall be afraid of.
304. **But all such babbling blockheads in his stead :** But instead of an honest man, such talkative fools who simply babble in an irresponsible manner, will be afraid of his criticism

305. **Let Sporus tremble :** Let Lord Hervey be afraid of my satire or severe attack and tremble with fear (because he is the proper object of Pope's wrath and satire.)

**Sporus :** Lord John Hervey (1696-1743.) He was "a supple politician and good Parliamentary debator." He held key posts, like Vice-Chamberlain and Lord Privy Seal. He was a Whig and also a favourite at Court. He showed himself to be a talented person by his book "Memoirs of George II." He was attacked by Alexander Pope as "Lord Fanny" because of his effeminacy. He married Mary Lepell whom Pope himself greatly admired. Though he was a man of talent and energy, he suffered from feeble health, drinking ass's milk and rouging his face to hide its ugliness. Moral Principle or public honour were never his characteristics. Pope hated him much. But the reason for his hatred or any quarrel between him and Hervey remains obscure. Pope attacked him for the first time in the *Miscellanies* in 1727. The attack was renewed in 1733 when Pope gave him the nick-name, "Lord Fanny." Then Lord Hervey gave a fitting retort, in verses, to the "Imitator of Horace," But Pope paid him back in a prose letter addressed to a Noble Lord. The final attack from Pope is in the presentation of Hervey as Sporus in the *Epistle* addressed to Dr. Arbuthnot. Sporus was a slave under Nero and Pope's adoption of the name for Hervey was simply out of spite and ill-will and deliberate intention to insult.

A : Arbuthnot.

**That thing of silk :** a man with gaudy silk dress.

306. **Sporus, that mere white curd of Ass's milk :** (Reference to Hervey's diet due to his bad health. Ass's milk is easily digestible and then Pope also was in the habit of taking it.) Arbuthnot bursts out at the mention of Sporus and calls him by the diet he takes.
307. **Satire or sense, alas ! can Sporus feel ? :** (This is rhetorical question with the answer implied that Sporus is incapable of feeling either satire or sense.)
308. **Who breaks a butterfly upon a wheel ? :** i.e., No one kills a butterfly by taking recourse to a wheel or a torturing



machine, because it is a very trifling affair. Dr. Arbuthnot suggests to Pope that it is waste of energy and time to attack Sporus by employing a complex form of satire because the Lord cannot feel sense or satire. Dr. Arbuthnot also is of the view that Hervey is a very insignificant person unworthy of Pope's satire.

**Wheel :** A torturing instrument with a wheel which revolves with the victim tied to it. The question is ; "Who cares to employ a vast machinery for killing an insignificant thing, like the butterfly ?"

309. **P :** Pope.

**Yet let me flap this bug with gilded wings :** Still, let me strike this bug (ill-smelling and blood-sucking insect) with golden wings—golden because Hervey is a favourite in the Court, bug because he is insignificant and mean.

310. **This painted child of dirt :** this profligate man with a rouge applied to his face to hide his ugliness.

**That stinks and stings :** that foul insect which emits bad odour and causes pain by its pricks.

311. **Whose buzz :** the sound produced by this ill-smelling and blood-sucking insect, while in flight, *i. e.*, while Hervey flies with his slander against his enemies.

**The witty and the fair annoys :** causes disgust in the minds of wits and fair women.

312. **Yet wit ne'er tastes, and beauty ne'er enjoys :** his buzz is never relished by the wits and never enjoyed by fair women.

313. **So well-bred spaniels civilly delight :** so well-trained hunting dogs take pleasure in.

314. **In mumbling of the game they dare not bite :** in chewing softly the game they carry in their mouth, without biting. Pope indirectly calls Lord Hervey a well-trained spaniel which holds it prey in the mouth without biting it, but taking pleasure only in mumbling it.

315. **Eternal smiles his emptiness betray :** His endless smiles reveal his shallowness.

316. **As shallow streams run dimpling all the way :** In the same way as streams of no depth flow on producing dimples or ripples on the surface. (The point is, Hervey

may smile for ever and on all occasions, with dimples on his cheeks, but on each occasion his shallowness (want of depth) is revealed.

317. **Whether in florid impotence he speaks :** whether he speaks in a flowery but ineffective style. (Reference to Hervey's Parliamentary speeches.)
318. **And, as the prompter breathes, the puppet squeaks :** He is like a puppet who acts only at the direction of a prompter. (The puppet dances or utters words in a shrill voice only at the direction of the showman. So also, Lord Hervey, who is a puppet according to Pope, dances to the tunes of the Prime Minister.)
- 319-20. **Or at the ear of Eve, familiar Toad, Half froth, half venom, spits himself abroad :** (The allusion here, is to Satan in the shape of a toad, tempting Eve in the Garden of Eden. Milton describes Satan thus :

"him there they found  
Squat ; like a Toad close at ears of Eve ;  
Assaying by his devilish art to reach  
The organs of her fancy."

Pope compares Hervey with Satan and Eve with Queen Caroline. It is said that Hervey used to sit close behind the ears of Queen Caroline (he managed to have his seat behind her hunting chaise) and pour into her ears words of temptation. What the toad spits or excretes, is half-froth and half-venom. So, according to Pope, what Hervey tells Queen Caroline is nothing but worthless and poisonous excretions of the toad.

- 321-22. **In puns, or politics, or tales, or lies, Or spite, or smut, or rhymes or blasphemies :** His (Hervey's) whisperings in the ears of Queen Caroline, are full of indecent things, like puns, politics, scandalous stories, hatred, idle and vulgar gossip, his own mean verses and impious talk.
323. **His wit all see-saw, between that and this :** His intelligence alternates between this and that or between the high and the low.

324. **Now master up, now miss :** On one occasion the masculine element is up, while on the other the feminine element predominates. It is said that Hervey is a strange mixture of the two sexes and that it is difficult to point out which element is predominant. Lady Mary Wortley Montague says that the world is divided into "men, women and Herveys."
325. **And he himself one vile Antithesis :** Hervey himself is the very embodiment of a worthless Antithesis, which is a figure of speech that balances two contradictory ideas.
326. **Amphibious thing :** A thing which lives on both land and water (when Hervey is emotional, he is described to be living on land ; and when he is crafty, he is described to be living on water. So, Pope calls him an amphibious thing.)
327. **Trifling head, or the corrupted heart :** On both occasions referred to above, he proves to be either an insignificant intellectual or a corrupt courtier.
328. **Fop at the toilet :** He is a dandy at the dressing table, and dresses himself in a gaudy, if not elegant, manner. **Flatt'rer at the board :** Flatterer or sycophant at the council board.
329. **Now trips a Lady, and now struts a Lord :** On one occasion, he moves with short light steps like a lady and on another occasion, he walks in an affected way like a Lord.
330. **Eve's tempter thus the Rabbins have exprest :** He is described as Satan by the Jewish scholars and teachers of Law.
331. **A cherub's face, a reptile all the rest :** He has the form which is half seraphic and half serpentine. (This is how the old painters represented Satan and not the Rabbins.)
332. **Beauty that shocks you :** Hervey's handsome features were such that shock the beholders rather than please them. (Outwardly, he is handsome but on close scrutiny he is repulsive.)
- Parts that none will trust :** He has such talents that no body will have any trust or confidence in them.

333. **Wit that can creep :** He has intelligence that can stoop to any mean level : In other words, he has grovelling wit.  
**And pride that licks the dust :** A false sense of pride which makes him stoop to any level. (Hervey makes proud assertions but his behaviour is always abject. So Pope saas that his self-pride is in striking contrast with his mean behaviour and does not matter, even if it is licking the dust.)
- 334-37. Pope indulges in self-praise in these lines. He says that it goes to the credit of one poet, (meaning himself), that he was no worshipper at the altar of Fortune nor a dupe to fashion, no mad seeker after Lucre or wealth, no tool in the hands of Ambition, nor proud nor servile, and that if he pleased anybody, it was only by manly and dignified ways.
335. **Lucre :** profit.  
**Madman :** mad seeker.
336. **Servile :** mean.
338. **That Flatt'ry, even to Kings, he held a shame :** Let it be said to the glory of that one poet who considered it a shame to flatter even Kings. (Pope avoided a visit from Queen Caroline.)
339. **And thought a Lie in verse or prose the same :** and regarded telling falsehood either in prose or poetry as equally bad.
340. **That not in Fancy's maze he wandere'd long :** That he did not stay for a long time in the confusing path of imagination. (Pope turned from writing fanciful poems like the *Pastorals* and *The Rape of the Lock* and began writing serious poems like *The Essay on Man* and the *Moral Essays*.)
341. **But stoop'd to Truth and moralize'd his song :** capriciously turns to writing didactic poetry.
342. **But Virtue's better end :** but Virtue's noble object.
343. **He stood the furious foe :** He opposed or withstood the angry enemy.  
**The timid friend :** the cowardly friend.
344. **The damning critic :** the critic who condemned (Pope's) works.

**Half-approving wit** : the wit who does not endorse Pope's poetry whole-heartedly.

345. **The coxcomb hit or fearing to be hit** : (Pope) withstood the attacks of the coxcombs and was never afraid of them.
- 345-46. He faced courageously the furious foe, the timid friend, the damning critic, the half-approving wit and coxcomb.
347. **Laugh'd at the loss of friends he never had** : He laughed at the suggestion of loss of friends, because he never had friends of that type, as described in the next line.
348. **The distant threats of vengeance on his head** : There were threats held out in vengeance upon him, but he was not afraid of them.
349. **The blow unfelt** : He never felt any blow from his enemies.  
**The tear he never shed** : He faced the lampoon courageously. Here is a reference to a lampoon published 1728, supposed to be by Lady Mary Wortley Montague.
350. **The tale reviv'd, the lie so oft o'erthrown** : (There were so many defamatory stories about Pope which were repeated again and again, but the falsehood of those libels was publicly disproved. The point is that the scandal revived again and again even after they were disproved and discredited. The scandalous stories were that "he received subscriptions for his *Shakespeare*, that he set his name to Mr. Brome's verses etc., which though publicly disproved, were nevertheless shamelessly repeated in the Libels."
351. **The imputed trash, and dulness not his own** : The dull and worthless poems which were imputed to Pope, were not his own. The opponents wilfully maligned his name by attributing the authorship of those verses to Pope.
352. **The morals blacken'd when the writings scape** : When his (Pope's) works escape criticism or were above criticism, from the hands of his enemies, then his private character or morals were criticised and scandalised in the blackest manner possible.
353. **The libel'd person, and the pictur'd shape** : They libelled the person and pictured the shape *i.e.*, they drew carica-

tures of his figure and his physical deformities. (He was described to have the shape of an interrogation mark. Dennis described him as "the very bow of the God of Love." Atterbury remarked that Pope had a crooked mind in a crooked body.)

354. **Abuse, on all he love'd, or lov'd him, spread ;** Abuse spread on all he loved, etc. *i.e.* the enemies spread scandals about pope's friends. (Pope says in his note : "The Duke of Buckingham, Earl of Burlington, Lord Bathurst, Lord Bolingbroke, Bishop Atterbury, Swift, Mr. Gay, Dr. Arbuthnot, his friends, his parents, and his very nurse, aspersed in printed papers by James Moore and G. Duckett Esquires, L. Welsted, Thomas Bentley and other obscure persons.")
355. **A friend in exile, or a father dead :** Abuse spread or scandals were made on his friend in exile, namely, Bolingbroke or his dead father.
356. **The whisper :** the scandal.  
**That to greatness still too near :** The whisper which is always near the ears of great men.
357. **Perhaps, yet vibrates on his Sov'reign's ear :** The scandal is perhaps still ringing in the ear of King George II. Perhaps it is still fresh in his memory.
358. **Welcome for thee fair Virtue :** (Pope regards himself as the embodiment of virtue and welcomes all the past sufferings and sorrows.
359. **For thee, fair Virtue :** For your sake.  
**Welcome ev'n the last :** even the last scandal which reached is king's ear, is welcome.
360. (Arbuthnot asks Pope why the latter chose to insult the poor men as well as the great men.)  
**Affront :** insult, openly.
361. **P. :** (Pope gives the answer.)  
**A knave's a knave, to me, in ev'ry state :** (According to Pope, a fool is a fool in every condition of life, whether rich or poor.)
362. **Alike my scorn :** Both the poor and the great deserve my contempt and ridicule, alike or in the same manner.

**If he succeed or fail :** whether he succeeds or fails.

363. **Sporus at court, or Japhet in a jail.** I shall satirise every one, whether it is Sporus or Lord Hervey at court, or Japhet Crook in jail ("Japhet Crook was convicted in 1731 of forging deeds of conveyance and fraudulently obtaining a will, and was sentenced to stand in the Pillory, have his ears cut off, his nose slit, his goods forfeited and be imprisoned for life.")

364. **A hireling scribbler :** a hack-writer who writes for money.

**Or a hireling peer :** a mercenary nobleman.

365. **Knight of the post corrupt :** ("Referring to shameless ruffians who sought employment in Westminster Hall as hired witnesses and walked openly, with a straw in their shoe to denote their quality.")

**Or of the shire :** Knights of the middle class English gentry called the burgesses. They acted as Members of the Parliament representing the country they belonged to.

366. **A Pillory.** An instrument of punishment in vogue for centuries all over Europe, consisting of a platform, a pole, cross-boards with holes in which the culprit's neck and wrists were placed and fastened. (This was the usual punishment given to seditious libellers.)

**Or near a throne :** being near to the King

367. **He gain his Prince's ear or lose his own :** he will be able to gain the King's hearing or he will lose his own ears at the Pillory. (Punishment in the Pillory was usually followed by the clipping of the ears.)

- 363-7. "I shall satirise every one, whether it is Lord Hervey at court or Japhet Crook in Jail. I shall hit at the hired scribbler, the hireling peer, the corrupt knight and even the county burgess. I shall not refrain from exposing these men even if I am put in a Pillory or made to gain the attention of a King, or even punished with the clipping of my ears."

368. **Yet soft by nature, more dupe than wit :** (Pope says that he is still very gentle by nature and is a more befooled person than a wit.)

369. **Sappho can tell you how this man was bit ;** Lady Mary Wortley Montague can vouchsafe how bitterly Pope was satirised and deceived by his enemies.
- Sappho :** (Lady Mary Wortley Montague, 1689-1762, (see line No. 101), was the wife of ambassador at Constantinople. She was a highly educated lady and was famous for her independent views. She was a champion of women's rights. She was an author and her 'Letters' were greatly praised. Her quarrels with Pope, her neighbour, were notorious indeed. The origin for their quarrels was not definitely known. However, Pope's proposal to her hand, forgetting for a moment that he was a contemptible cripple and that her husband was in a high position, drew from the lady an immoderate fit of laughter. It is said that Pope could never excuse her derisive and convulsive laughter.)
370. **This dreaded Satirist Dennis will confess :** Dennis the critic (see line 153) will admit that this much-feared satirist, that is, Pope himself.
371. **Foe to his pride, but friend to his distress :** Dennis will even confess that Pope was against his (Dennis's) proud nature but generous in his sufferings. (According to John Bull, pope had tried in 1731, when Dennis was in distress, to promote a subscription—edition of some of Dennis's works.)
372. **So humble, he has knock'd at Tibbald's door :** Pope says he was so humble that he went to Theobald's house without any feeling of pride probably to say that he acknowledged many of the latter's emendations, in his second edition of Shakespeare. The allusion is not quite clear. But Pope admitted adoption of only 25 emendations made by Theobald though he coolly appropriated many.
- 373-4. Pope says in these lines that he had drunk in the company of Colley Cibber and even wrote verses for James Moore Smythe, referring to the dinner he once gave to Cibber and the rhymes which Moore Smythe plagiarised, in his play, called—The Rival Modes.)
374. **Full ten years slandered, did he once reply :** Even though Pope was slandered for full ten years, he did not give a reply. That is Pope waited till 1728 to give a reply as contained in Dunciad, books 1-3.



375. **Three thousand suns went down :** nearly ten years passed.  
**On Welsted's lie :** on the false accusations made by Welsted in his satire on Pope and his friends. (Welsted was a Whig journalist) of Pope's Age.
376. **To please a Mistress one aspers'd his life :** William Windham to please his mistress, Lady Delorain, published slanders against pope's life, (by collaborating with Lady Mary Wortley Montague and Hervey. The reference is to Verses to an Imitator of Horace.)  
**One :** William Windham.  
**Mistress :** Lady Delorain.  
**Asperse'd :** slandered.  
**His life :** Pope's life.
377. **He lashed him not :** (Pope says that he did not attack Windham in return.  
**But let her be his wife :** but allowed Lady Delorain to be Windham's wife : (Elwin and Courthope's edition of Pope's poems, gives the following note :—"I suspect the *mistress* is meant for Teresa Blount. As far as we know, there were only two women whom Pope would have believed desirous of defaming his life—Teresa Blount and Lady Mary. It is not likely that the latter was meant, for she is openly aimed at in other passages of this satire and besides the woman alluded to is evidently unmarried. Pope suspected Teresa of having in 1725 spread a malicious report respecting his relations with her sister (Martha) and on the 20th July, 1729 he wrote to Caryll that she was engaged in an intrigue with a married man. If she is the person here glanced at, the poet must claim for his moderation in refraining from publicly exposing the immorality of his traducers.
378. **Let Budgel charge low Grubstreet on his quill :** He (Pope) allowed Budgel to accuse him with alleged contributions to the Grub Journal.  
**Budgel :** Eustace Budgel (1686-1737). He was cousin to Addison. Nearly thirty-seven numbers of the Spectator were ascribed to him. It is said that he got a larger part of Dr. Matthew Tindal's estate by forging his will

and thus depriving the share of the next heir to Tindal. (Mark Pattison explains the line thus :—"Pope allowed Budgel charge Pope's pen with having been employed in contributing to the Grub Street Journal." Though it is ascertained that Pope communicated some paragraphs to it, he denies it in a note thus and says : "Budgel, in a weekly pamphlet called *The Bee*, bestowed much abuse on him, in the imagination that he writ some things about the last will of Dr. Tindall in the Grub Street Journal, a paper wherein he never had the least hand, direction or supervisal, nor the least knowledge of its author."

379. **And write whatever he pleased except his will :** Pope says that he allowed Budgel to write everything he pleased except forging his will. (Here is an insinuation at Budgel's forgery of Tindal's will.)
380. **Let the two Curlls of Town and Court, abuse :** (Pope) allowed Curll the book-seller of the town and Hervey, the Curll of the Court, abuse or publish libels.
381. **His father, mother, body, soul and muse :** Allowed them to write against his parents, his physical body, his spiritual condition and his poetry. (Pope says in his explanatory note that, in some pamphlets published by Curll and others, Pope's father was described to be "a mechanic, a hatter, a farmer, nay a bankrupt". This is about Curll, the book-seller of the town. But the Curll of Court, namely Hervey, in collaboration with Lady Mary Wortley Montague also, wrote several pamphlets on Pope wherein his personal deformities were ridiculed. One such pamphlet argues out that his little carcass was the only reason for his being "unwhipt, unblanketed unkick-ed". Another lampoon (ascribed to the pen of Lady Mary) describes that his "crabbed numbers" were "hard as his heart and as his birth obscure."
382. **Yet why ? :** Still why did I allow them ?
- 382-3. **That father held it for a rule, It was a sin to call our neighbour fool :** Because my father taught me the principle that I should not attack my neighbour, though a fool.
384. **That harmless Mother thought no wife a whore :** Pope's mother (who was also attacked) was a noble lady and she

did not damage any married woman's reputation by scandalising her.

385. **Hear this and spare his family, James Moore :** Pope addresses James Moore and asks him to hear or know the integrity of his parents and then requests him to spare his attack's on them.

(There is a severe insinuation here because James Moore Smythe was regarded as an illegitimate child and that his mother was often spoken of a whore or an adulteress.)

386. **Unspotted names and memorable long :** Pope says his parents were persons without any blemish to their name or reputation and worthy of long remembrance.

387. **If there be force in Virtue or in Song :** If Pope's virtue and poetry have any power in them, those names will be remembered for a long time. (In other words, he proposes to make their names immortal through his poetry.)

388. **Of gentle blood :** with the blood of a noble man flowing in him. (Pope claims to have connexion with the Earls of Downe, on his father's side.)

**Part shed in honour's cause :** On the other part, i.e., from his mother, there is connexion with the Turners one who was killed in honour's cause or the service of Charles I.

389. **While yet in Britain Honour had applause :** During which time Honour was still appreciated, (meaning that in Pope's period it was not the case).

390. **Each parent sprung :** Both of his parents came from noble families.

**What fortune, pray ? :** (Arbuthnot requests Pope to tell him about the wealth of his parents.)

**P. Their own :** Pope replies that they had their own wealth.

391. **And better got :** obtained in better manner.

**Than Bestia's from the throne :** than the way in which the Duke of Marlborough got wealth from Queen Anne.

(Here is a hit against the Duke of Marlborough who made a fortune out of the wars of Spanish succession. Queen Anne loaded h<sup>e</sup> with riches and honours. He was

guilty of misappropriation of public money. Finally he was made to retire compulsorily and was even publicly disgraced.)

392. **Born to no Pride, inheriting no strife** : Pope's parents were humble and without any pride. They inherited no family quarrels.
393. **Nor marrying Discord in a noble wife** : They had a happy domestic or married life. (Here is a reference intended to Dryden and Addison, who got advancement in life by seeking marriage alliances with noble families. Dryden married Lady Elizabeth Howard, while Addison married Countess of Warwick. In both cases, there was *discord* or domestic unhappiness. But Pope's father had a happy domestic life. (And Pope never married at all.)
394. **Stranger to civil and religious rage** : Pope's father was a stranger to political and religious fanaticism.
395. **The good man walked innocuous thro' his age** : Pope's father (who was a gentleman) lived his life in a peaceful manner **Innocuous** : harmless.
396. **No Courts he saw** : he did not go to any of the Courts. **No suits would ever try** : did not launch any prosecution against any body in a law court.
397. **Nor dar'd an Oath nor hazarded a Lie** : He never took an oath in a law court nor did he ever risk telling a lie.
398. **Unlearned he knew no schoolman's subtle art** : He did not indulge in the subtle art of reasoning employed by theologians, because he was not well-versed in it.
399. **No language, but the language of the heart** : He was not a master of languages, but he knew the language of the heart, *i.e.*, he was sincere, outspoken, and straightforward.
401. **Healthy by temp'rance** : enjoyed sound health on account of temperate habits.  
**And by exercise** : and also by taking regular physical exercise.
402. **To sickness past unknown** : Pope's father did not suffer from any disease.
403. **His death was instant and without a groan** : His death

occurred peacefully and without any suffering.

A groan : a cry of pain.

404. O grant me, thus to live and thus to die : Pope prays to God to grant him a similar life and death.
405. Who sprung from Kings shall know less joy than I : If Pope is granted his desire, then he will be more happy than even the princes born in King's families.
406. O Friend ! : O Dr. Arbuthnot.  
May each domestic bliss be thine ; May you be blessed with every domestic happiness !
407. Be no unpleasing Melancholy mine : May I also not suffer from any unpleasant sorrow.
408. Me, let the Tender office long engage : Let me be able to discharge the tender duty of serving my mother for a long time.
409. To rock the cradle of reposing Age : To attend on the old mother (who died at 93) and be of some comfort to her in her last stage of life, with his affectionate services (as soothing as when rocked in a cradle.)
410. With lenient arts : with gentle attention or service.  
Extend a Mother's breath : prolong her life.
411. Make Languor smile : make her smile or be cheerful even in her weak state of health.  
And smooth the bed of Death : and comfort her at the time of death.
412. Explore the thought, explain the asking eye : Read her thoughts and answer them (when she could no longer speak).
413. And keep her or preserve her for some time more from sky or death.
- 414-15. If by such care human life can be prolonged, I pray to God to bless my friend, Arbuthnot, with a long life and preserve him against suffering or sorrow.
- 416-17. May he be blessed to remain a sociable, cheerful and calm person as fortunate as when he served Queen Anne ! (It should be noted that Arbuthnot lost his post as physician extraordinary, after the Queen's death.)
418. (Arbuthnot replies, that he has been calmly reconciled to his lot, and every thing shall be all right whether that blessing is granted or not. He says that rest is in the

hands of God and thus displays his religious resignation.) (Warburton points out that this sentiment is "very expressive of that religious resignation which was the character of both of Dr. Arbuthnot's temper and piety.)

**Note :** Mark Pattison remarks on the lines 408-13 thus : "The pathetic sweetness of these lines is not surpassed by anything else which Pope has written". Leslie-Stephen says : "If there are more tender and exquisitely-expressed lines in the language, I do not know where to find them; and yet again I should be glad not to be reminded by a cruel commentator that Mrs. Pope had been dead for two years when they were published, and that even this touching effusion has therefore a taint of dramatic affectation."

## XIX

### STRIKING PASSAGES

1. *The Dog-star rages ! nay 't is past a doubt,  
All Bedlam, or Parnassus, is let out :  
Fire in each eye, and papers in each hand,  
They rave, recite, and madden round the land.*

[ Lines 3-6 ]

Alexander Pope puts on an admirable pose, even at the outset that he is a contended and peace-loving poet, but is being frequently tormented by poetasters, who seek his help in a variety of ways. So he instructs his servant John Searle to shut the door and tie up the knocker and send away the visitors under some pretext or the other.

In Pope's view, the dog-star under whose influence the dogs turn mad, is exercising its fierce influence because all lunatics or poetasters are streaming in at his door, like mad dogs. They carry papers or their latest compositions and appear to have further inspiration to write but while they recite their verses, it is like the raving of a madman.

Pope uses the words *Bedlam* and *Parnassus* in a sarcastic way to indicate that either the whole lunatic asylum or the mountain abode of the Muses is let loose because his visitors have gathered at his mansion gate in such large numbers. Pope expressed his eagerness to be protected from their torment.

Referring to this passage, Edith Sitwell says : "And Pope places the caesura, the pause (of varying depths) not only to vary the music of his verse, but to heighten the meaning. In this way, the slightness of the pauses in the second line give the effect of a dishevelled procession streaming past one. In the fourth line, the fact that the first and second verbs are alliterative, and rather long-sounding, with their hard R's and that the third verb begins with a thick thumping M, gives the degree of irritation which was felt by the poet."

2. *Then from the Mint walks forth the man of rhyme,  
Happy to catch me just at Dinner-time.*

[ Lines 13-14 ]

Pope begins his *Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot* with an instruction to his servant John Searle to stop from seeing him, and send away under some pretext or the other. He expresses his disgust for these so-called tormentors because they do not allow Pope to have rest even on Sunday. There poetasters pursue him and torment him wherever he is. Pope says that Sunday is no day of rest for him, and the church even is not the place to shield him from them. But Sunday is Sabbath day and the insolvent writers can go about freely without any fear of arrest. So, they come out from the Mint or "the place to which insolvent debtors retired to enjoy an illegal protection and to shield one another from the prosecution of their creditors", to pester Pope with sundry requests. Even the temple is not allowed to give him religious rest because he is pestered by these minor Poets even at that place. Further, they do not hesitate to catch Pope at his dinner time with the hope of being invited to it.

This is indeed a hit against the poverty of these minor poets. As Leslie Stephen rightly remarks, "Pope has ridiculed men for being obscure, poor stupid—faults not to be amended by satire, nor rightfully provocative of enmity".

3. *Arthur, whose giddy son neglects the laws,  
Imputes to me and my damn'd works the cause :  
Poor Cornus sees his frantic wife elope,  
And curses Wit, Poetry and Pope.*

[ Lines 23-26 ]

In the *Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot*, Pope tells us how he has been unreasonably accused of several things. Whenever anything runs awry or goes wrong, Pope continues, he is held responsible for it. For example, if James Moore-Smythe violates any of the religious, moral or public laws, Pope is blamed for it. Similarly, if Mrs. Walpole in her frenzy elopes with another, Pope is charged with having inspired her to do so, with his wit and poetry. The reason imputed is no doubt silly, but it is a fact that Walpole has blamed Pope because his poetry and wit were held responsible for filling her mind with evil thoughts.

Arthur here, is Arthur Moore a Parliamentary Member from the Grimbley Constituency and Commissioner of Trade and Plantations, under Queen Anne. His son James Moore, and afterwards, Moore-smythe, is charged with plagiarism for having stolen Pope's lines addressed to Martha Blount on her birth-day. It is he who has violated the laws, but the father imputes the violation as due to the evil influence of Pope's works.



The other reference is to Cornus (a fanciful name Pope gives) or Lord Walpole. His wife, Margaret, an heiress to the rich estate of her father Samuel Rolle, is a vivacious and charming lady that has won the praise of the most fashionable wit of the day, namely, Lady Mary Wortley Montague. But she deserts her husband in a frenzy, within nine years of married life. And Lord Walpole charges Pope for having exercised unwholesome influence on her by his poems.

Pope cleverly points out the ridiculousness of these imputations and establishes his innocence of all such blemishes.

4. *Seiz'd and tied down to judge, how wretched I!  
ho can't be silent, and who will not lie.*

[ Lines 33-34 ]

Alexander Pope indulges in these lines, extracted from the *Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot*, in self-pity and also self-praise. He says he has been subjected to a great fix, because the poetasters, if friends, read him dead, and, if foes, write him dead. They take out his life by their lampoons or they bore him to the quick by reading to him their endless compositions. In either way, he is in a wretched pitiable condition having been forced to listen to their useless trash. But, he admits, by nature he cannot remain silent, having heard the trash, and cannot refrain himself from commenting on worthlessness of the compositions, because he can not utter a falsehood simply to please them.

Thus the first line is an expression of self-pity while the second one is an indulgence in self-praise. But both form parts of an admirable pose, whether true or false, and bespeaks of the poet facing dilemma, in deciding a course of action without hurting his conscience.

The expression "seiz'd and tied down to judge" has a resemblance to the one used in Wycherley's play, called *The Plain Dealer* where Oldfox gags and ties down the widow to hear his stanzas. The analogy is that Pope is also forced, though much unwillingly, to judge, the works of minor-poets who tormented him. Pope says he is caught up in a fix as to how to avoid these tormentors.

5. *Pitholeon libell'd me,—but here's a letter  
Informs you, Sir, 't was when he knew no better.*

*'Dare you refuse him? Curll invites to dine,  
'He'll write a Journal, or he'll turn Divine'.*

[ Lines 51-54 ]

Pope refers to, one by one, several poetasters who frequently pester him with request for help, in a variety of ways. Among them, Pitholeon is one. Critics are of the opinion that the name refers to (1) a foolish poet a Rhodes with pretensions to knowledge of Greek, (2) Leonard Welsted, a contemporary poet and critic, (3) Thomas Cooke who has already libelled against Pope and earned the latter's ill-will, and (4) any hanger on the Whigs in general. In all probability, the name refers to Thomas Cooke, because he has attacked Pope in the *London Journal*, a thing which has been referred to in the passage cited above.

This Pitholeon has once attacked Pope and has expressed his apology saying that the attack was made when he did not know Pope fully well. But he does not accept Pitholeon's apology, the latter has threatened Pope by renewing his attacks in the *London Journal* having been invited by Curll, (the notorious book-seller and publisher) and instigated by him to do so.

Pope's point is, if he refuses to recommend Pitholeon to the Duke, then the poetaster will join Curll to carry libels against him. But the bitter sting comes when Pope says that if this hack-writer fails in his attempts to damn the reputation of Pope, he will turn a penitent clergyman or enter the church which, in the 18th century "was increasingly regarded as a profession instead of a vocation". There was a general lack of sanctity in the clergy of the time.

Thus the lines hit at the poetaster, the book-seller and the church, all at once.

6. *The truth once told (and wherefore should we lie?)  
The Queen of Midas slept, so may I.*

[ Lines 81-82 ]

In Pope's Epistle, Dr Arbuthnot is represented to have remonstrated the poet not to refer to Queens, Ministers or Kings, as it is a dangerous thing. But the impetuous poet persists in exposing the truth about those foolish writers, by publishing the *Dunciad*. Then only, Pope says, he can have sound sleep like the Queen of Midas. According to him each fool is an ass and this secret should be proclaimed to all.

The passage refers to King Midas who was cursed by Apollo to have ass's ears, to indicate his stupidity in the decision he made as an umpire in a musical contest. But the King naturally tried his best to hide his ears. The Queen, however, learnt the secret, and Pope says, her mind was relieved only after she told the secret to a hole dug in the ground which was later on spread by the blowing winds in all directions. Pope means to get similar relief only after he circulates the truth and proclaims that each fool is an ass.

The passage throws light on Pope's mental attitude, one of restlessness till he publishes his unpleasant attacks even against asses as he calls them, and whatever their truth be. This attitude is no doubt complimentary to Pope, whatever his arguments be. It is the outcome of cantankerous attitude and ungenerous, if not mean, nature !

7. *Whom have I hurt ? has poet yet, or peer,  
Lost the arched eye-brow, or Parnassian sneer ?*

[ Lines 95-96 ]

Alexander Pope ably defends himself and his frequent use of satire, in his epistle addressed to Arbuthnot. He tells his friend that he has been often charged with cruelty in his attacks. Pope contends that it is not true. He argues that he has attacked only the foolish poetasters who are in general very thick-skinned and hence incapable of smarting under any blow. Pope ironically asserts that in spite of the so called biting satires he employed, the poets and peers continue to enjoy their haughtiness and insolence as ever. In other words, Pope says that he has not succeeded in taming or reforming his victims by his satires. Hence the rhetorical question "whom have I hurt ?" The next question "Has any poet or lord lost the pride and insolence of his eye-brow or the derisive smile characteristic of a poet inspired by a Muse of the Parnassian mountain ?", gives the answer in the negative and hence proves that Pope has not really or effectively hurt any one.

This kind of quibbling or twisting of argument, Pope is greatly capable of and the passage has its intended effects of simulation and dissimulation.

8. *Ammon's great son one shoulder had too high,  
Such Ovid's nose, and "Sir ! you have an Eye"—*

[ Lines 117—18 ]

In the course of his epistle to Arbuthnot, Alexander Pope gives out some examples of flattery he had from the poor poetasters who sought his assistance in some form or other. One example of such flattery is that Pope has one shoulder too high as that of Alexander the Great; and another instance is that he has a nose like Ovid's and eyes of remarkable power.

Ammon's son is Alexander the Great, called after the name of the God of the land, is described by the historians to have an inclination towards the left shoulder. Ovid, the famous poet of the Augustan Age is credited with a peculiar nose. The flatterers of Pope bring his physical deformities into lime-light and associate them with great names. Pope points out therefore, the ridiculousness of such a flattery. Hence, they cannot be genuine compliments. They only reveal the absurdity of the flatterers.

Warburton says: "It is remarkable that among these compliments on his infirmities and deformities, he mentions his eye, which was fine, sharp and piercing. It was done to intimate that flattery was as odious to him when there was some ground for commendation, as there was none." Mark Pattison, is, however, of the opinion that Warburton has missed the point of irony. The fact is Pope has some trouble in the eyes and we have his own authority on it as he refers to a medical consultation in his Epistle addressed to Bolingbroke.

9. *From these the world will judge of men and books,  
Not from the Burnets, Oldmixons and Cookes.*

[ Lines 145-46 ]

In the course of his letter to Arbuthnot, Pope refers to the great encouragement he received from the hands of eminent writers and critics like Granville, Walsh, Garth, Congreve, Swift, Somers, Sheffield and others. In fact, one reason for his continuing to write poetry, (the other being his natural urge for it) is due to the encouragement and inspiration given by such eminent men of letters. This gratitude and affection for friends, on the part of Pope, is one of the few noble traits to be found in him.

He says that the opinions of these standard critics have permanent value and the critical opinion of the world would indeed be directed by the galaxy critics listed above. So far, so good. But then comes the sneer. Pope says that the public

opinion cannot be shaped or influenced by the worthless views of Burnets, Oldmixons and Cookes.

Burnet was a historian and Oldmixon and Cooke were writers of scandalous chronicles. Pope classifies all the three as types representing worthless criticism and perversion of history, or to be brief as writers of a very mediocre calibre. Burnet is indeed a great writer, but Pope belittles him along with the other two. With the dexterous employment of the figure synecdoche, Pope asserts that the judgment of men and books will not be guided by these inferior writers at all.

10. *Pains, reading, study are their just pretence,  
And all they want is spirit, taste, and sense,  
Commas and points they set exactly right,  
And 't were a sin to rob them of their mite.*

[ Lines 159-62 ]

In these lines, Pope indulges in a fling at the critics of his time in general and Bentley and Theobald in particular. According to him, they are painstaking and studious and they claim those qualities also. But Pope continues, they are all woefully wanting in spirit, taste and sense. Pope refers to their *just* (ironically used) pretensions or proper claims, and quickly points out in the next breath their shallowness and absence of depth, by saying all that they can do is putting or inserting the punctuation marks in their right places. And the final derision is that it is a sin to deprive them of their mite or modest contribution.

Pope does not name Bentley and Theobald so far, and he is doing it shortly, and as he himself tells previously, he cannot have relief till he mentions their names, as the Queen of Midas !

In this connexion, it should be noted that Bentley is an editor of *Paradise Lost* and Theobald is the editor of Shakespeare's plays. Pope talks in an insolent way that he is prepared to allow those minor critics to have the pleasure of their pretended and presumed fame or popularity.

11. *Ev'n such small Critics some regard may claim,  
Preserv'd in Milton's or in Shakespeare's name.  
Pretty ! in amber to observe the forms  
Of hairs, or straws, or dirt, or grubs or worms !  
The things, we know, are neither rich nor rare,  
But wonder how the devil they got there.*

[ Lines.167-72 ]

According to Pope even minor critics claim some regard and command respect, but they are not indeed critics of high order. Their names are ever remembered because they are associated with poets of immortal reputation, say, Milton or Shakespeare. Such critics, Pope says, are no better than forms of hairs or straws or dirt or worms in amber. But one wonders "how the devil they got there" or they have been able to associate their names with Milton and Shakespeare and thus preserve their own names.

In this context, it should be remembered that Bentley edited *Paradise Lost* while Theobald edited Shakespeare's Plays. Pope calls the critics forms of hairs, or straw or dirt or worms found in amber. To call Bentley and Theobald by such names shows Pope's malice only, because both of them are great critics. They are indeed to be counted among the most famous commentators in England. To deprive them of independent glory or status excepting the fact of being commentators of the immortal poets, is not only unjust but also cruel on the part of Pope.

12. *A man's true merit 'tis not hard to find ;  
But each man's secret standard in his mind,  
That casting-weight pride adds to emptiness,  
This, who can gratify ? for who can guess ?*

[ Lines 175-78 ]

After satirising against Bentley and Theobald, Pope indulges in a generalisation that a man's true worth can be judged without much difficulty, and that he can be given his due. But the only difficulty is that every man has his own standard of merit. Naturally he will have an over-estimate of his worth. If any body gives an under-estimate of it, he pounces on the critic with his lampoons. Here, his pride also dominates in his notions about himself, though he is indeed shallow. And Pope asks if any one can satisfy such critics because no body can guess their true worth.

If the same question is put to Pope himself, it is also difficult to guess his own standard of judgment.

13. *Like Cato, gives his little Senate laws,  
And sit attentive to his own applause.*

[ Lines 209-210 ]

In his famous Atticus Passage, Alexander Pope compares Addison to Cato (a Roman of unbending character, and absolute, integrity and supporter of Pompey). Addison is described to be assuming the pose of the great Cato in formulating his princi-

ples to his little senate or the small group of toadies and flatterers. Addison is further described to be sitting bemused with the praises of his flatterers.

How Pope cleverly sings and stings, is illustrated in these terse lines.

14. *Proud as Apollo on his forked hill,  
Sat full-blown Bufo, puff'd by evry quill;  
Fed with soft Dedication all day long,  
Horace and he went hand in hand with song.*

[ Lines 231-34 ]

In these, we find Pope attacking against Bufo who stands for Lord Halifax. The tradition goes to that effect and Mark Pattison finds no reason for doubting it. But Macaulay points out "the seeming puzzle that a man who loved literature passionately, and rewarded literary merit munificently, should have been more savagely reviled both in prose and verse than almost any politician in our history."

Pope says that this Bufo occupies his seat on a high pedestal like Apollo on one of the two summits of Mt. Parnassus. Apollo is one of the great gods of Olympus typifying the Sun in its light and life-giving energy. His abode is on Mount Parnassus and he is considered to be the presiding Deity over music, poetry and the healing art. The point of Pope's comparison is, that Bufo is enjoying the height of his glory as a patron of fine arts, presiding over a number of flattering poets. According to Pope, Halifax was fed by the pleasing dedications of poets throughout the day. Here Pope hits at the great desire of the Lord to have a number of dedications of books to his credit, from the needy poets who sought his patronage. It is also said that Halifax wanted Pope to dedicate his *Homer* to him, but the latter sent a cool answer and the negotiation passed off."

In the last line of the passage, Pope refers to how some poets flattered him by comparing him even with Horace, the great Roman lyricist and satirist (65-8 B. C.). We find a ridiculing irony throughout the ringing line full of liquid sounds—atleast six n's

15. *But still the great have kindness in reserve,  
He help'd to bury whom he help'd to starve.*

[ Lines 247-48 ]

Pope continues his satire against Bufo or Lord Halifax, the celebrated Whig statesman and patron of letters. Macaulay wonders why Pope should revile against him, "a man who loved literature passionately and rewarded munificently". But Pope pictures Halifax as a mean patron, paying some bards with wine, some others with praise and others in kind, forcing them to sit and listen to his own works almost for an equal length of time they took in rehearsing their own poems. Then Pope refers to Dryden (1631-1700) an outstanding man of letters during the Restoration period and the founder of the English heroic couplet. Fortunately, only Dryden got off safely from the unpleasant criticism of his works by this patron-critic. Dryden, we know, belonged to the opposite party of Halifax, both in politics and religion.

Pope says that these so called great patrons have some kind qualities kept in reserve. So, though they help starving the poets during their life-time, they help burying the men of letters after their death. This is indeed a very biting sarcasm and the reference is to Halifax's offer to pay the expenses of Dryden's funeral with a monument. Probably Lord Halifax did not help Dryden in his penury, because he might have thought that a Tory poet and Catholic convert as Dryden was, should be having help from his own party. But the charge is there and Pope charges Halifax cruelly in the above lines.

16. *Can sleep without a poem in my head,  
Nor know, if Dennis be alive or dead.*

[ Lines 269-70 ]

Alexander Pope indulges in self-praise on occasions in the course of his letter to Arbuthnot. In the passage given he makes two statements. The first is that he can sleep well without being disturbed by thoughts of poetic composition. The second is that he is utterly indifferent to the fate of his enemies like Dennis. Both these statements sound like facts coming as they do with all assertion. But both of them are stranger than fiction !

Regarding the first, we have evidence to show how he has been frequently exercised in mind with poetic ideas, because he used to ring for his maid on wintry nights to bring him writing material. It may be to note down a flying thought or a felicitous expression. Whatever it be, it is clear he has been brooding on things and not enjoying sound sleep. So, we have to consider it a great pose when Pope says he sleeps without a poem in his head, because it is a deliberate lie.



The second assertion regarding his attitude to Dennis is equally false. It is clear from contemporary accounts how he used to react to the attacks of his enemies. When such be his nature, it is difficult to believe that Pope has been supremely indifferent to Dennis. Of course, Dennis the critic (1657-1734) quarrelled with many and attacked even Addison, and called Pope in particular, "a stupid, impudent, hunch-backed toad." Pope retaliated him in an anonymous pamphlet and took his revenge.

Thus these lines which claim Pope's tranquillity and rest, and indifference and unconcerned nature towards his enemies, are in the form of a dignified pose which the poet assumes. Strangely enough, Pope himself tells us elsewhere in this Epistle that a lie, in verse or prose is the same !

17. *Who to the Dean and Silver-bell can swear,  
And sees at Canons what was never there.*

[ Lines 299-3.0 ]

In his Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot, Pope takes cudgels against all the false friends who are mere scandal-mongers. Some of them are perpetrators of enmity between persons. Pope refers to such people ( who swear that Dean and Silver bell described in his *Moral Essays* are intended to ridicule the Duke of Chandos ) and says that they alone, and not honest men, will not be able to endure Pope's attack.

The reference in this passage, is to the description of Timon's Villa in Pope's IV *Moral Essays*, which is said to be a satire on Canons, the most magnificent mansion of the Duke of Chandos. On the authority of eminent critics like Johnson and Carruthers we find Pope's real intentions, though in these lines he dissimulates that it is merely an imaginary description and complains against false friends who misled the Duke into misunderstanding. Commentators of this passage correctly point out how Pope goes back from his original stand or intention and how this going-back, is a part of Pope's nature.

18. *A lash like mine no honest man shall dread,  
But all such babbling blockheads in his stead.*

[ Lines 303-4 ]

After referring to the Dean and the Silver-bell, whose description Pope avows now to be a purely imaginary one, Pope says that an honest man need not be afraid of his satire. It is only

the irresponsible lampoon-writers who misrepresent an imaginary description and dub it as deliberate falsehood, that need be afraid of his attacks. Pope says that he never lashes or attacks honest critics. He lashes severely only such talkative fools who simply babble in an irresponsible manner.

The second line of the passage is an example of pleasing alliteration and is full of force and precision.

19. *Satire or sense, alas ! Can Sporus feel ?  
Who breaks a butterfly upon a wheel ?*

[ Lnes 307-8 ]

*The Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot* is in the form of a dialogue. Occasionally Arbuthnot is made to speak. When Pope begins to refer to Sporus, Arbuthnot interrupts and suggests that Pope need not take recourse to employ the powerful instrument of satire to hit against Lord Hervey who cannot feel either sense or satire and who is no better than a gaudy butterfly.

Arbuthnot, who is regarded as the scholarly and amiable gentleman of the age, is here made to speak slightly of Sporus or Lord Hervey as the man of silk, drinker of ass's milk and stupid fellow without any sense of feeling for anything like satire. According to Arbuthnot, Hervey is therefore an insignificant person and need not require the instrument of satire to hurt him. He gives the analogy of a butterfly to kill which no complex machinery of the wheel is required. So, he suggests to Pope to leave Hervey severely alone, as he does not deserve even Pope's satire. Pope therefore need not waste his skill and energy in a satirical attack against Hervey.

We do not have any evidence to show if this most admirable gentleman, Arbuthnot has attacked Hervey in any context. If Pope puts these words into the mouth of this much esteemed man, it is only to heighten the forcible effect in depicting the despicable nature of Hervey. And Pope does it, God only knows, with or without any basis of truth.

20. *Eve's tempter thus tho' rabbins have exprest,  
A Cherub's face, a reptile all the rest.*

[ Lines 330-31 ]

These lines are taken from the Sporus passage in Pope's *Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot*. Lord Hervey like Satan, is represented to have an angel's face but serpentine in other aspects. The

old painters used to represent Satan as half-angelic and half-serpentine. But Pope says that the rabbins or the Jewish scholars and teachers of Law have described Satan like that. It is not correct. However, the point is that Hervey is said to resemble Satan in those two aspects. But, the fact is that though Hervey had originally a beautiful countenance, it was greatly disfigured later on, on account of some disease and therefore there is point for Pope's insinuation.

In the succeeding two lines, Pope says that Hervey's handsome features were shocking on close examination, that his talents never inspired trust or confidence in others, that his intelligence was so mean that it could be described as grovelling wit, and finally that his false sense of pride made him lick even the dust.

21. *That Flattr'y, ev'n to King's, he held a shame,  
And thought a Lye in verse or prose the same.*

[ Lines 338-39 ]

Pope indulges in self-praise on certain occasions in the Epistle addressed to Dr. Arbuthnot. He says that it goes to the credit of *one* poet, meaning himself, that he is no worshipper at the altar of Fortune, no dupe to Fashion, no mad seeker of Lucre or wealth, no tool in the hands of Ambition, not proud, not servile, and that he pleases people, ( if at all he pleased ) in manly and dignified ways.

In this context, Pope adds : "Let it be said to the glory of that one poet who considered it a shame to flatter even the royal rulers". Of course, Pope has avoided a visit from Queen Caroline. Pope's next claim is that he regards falsehood in verse or prose equally shameful.

Surprisingly enough Pope attributes to himself that noble quality of truthfulness, though he himself tells comfortable lies. For example, he says he can sleep without being disturbed by poetic ideas ; he says he does not care to know if Dennis is alive or dead ; he says his description of the Dean and Silver bell is purely imaginary and a host of such lies and yet claims for veracity in his compositions.

22. *That not in Fancy's maze he wander'd long,  
But stoop'd to Truth, and moralis'd his song.*

[ Lines 340-41 ]

Pope continues his self-laudation. He tells us that he has not stayed for a long time in the intricate field of imagination.

In other words, Pope turns from writing fanciful poems like the *Pastorals* and *The Rape of the Lock* and begins writing serious poems like the *Essay on Man* and the *Moral Essays*. In this latter poetic effort, Pope tells us, he has come down to revealing Truth of the unknown and turned didactic. His main purpose is one of moralising.

These lines have some auto-biographical significance because they reveal the change in Pope's poetic attitude.

23. *Sappho can tell you how this man was bit ;  
This dreaded Sat'rist Dennis will confess  
Foe to his pride, but friend to his distress :  
So humble, he has knocked at Tibbald's door,  
Has drunk with Cibber, nay has rhymed for Moore.*

[ Lines 369-73 ]

Alexander Pope declares his intention that he shall satirise every fool, whether he is Lord Hervey at Court or Japhet in jail. He shall hit at the hired scribbler, the hiring peer, the corrupt knight and the county burgess. He shall not refrain from exposing those fools, even if he were put in a pillory or tempted with the attentions of a king or even punished with the clipping of his ears.

After this forthright declaration, Pope still asserts that he is gentle by nature and is a more befooled person than a wit. Then he cites the name of Sappho or the celebrated wit of the time, Lady Mary Wortley Montague, who can vouchsafe how he has been cruelly bit or attacked by his enemies. Even Dennis, ( a contemporary critic and enemy of Pope ) will admit how the much-feared satirist, i.e., Pope himself, is against his (Dennis's) proud nature but generous in his sufferings.

This statement is corroborated by John Bull who says : "Pope had tried in 1731 to promote a subscription edition of some of Dennis's works". But, according to Mark Pattison, the prologue which Pope wrote to Dennis's play, *The Provoked Husband*, when the latter was in distressed circumstances, was full of sneering ridicule which poor Dennis failed to perceive.

In the last two lines of the passage given, Pope pretends humility as he has called on Theobald without any feeling of pride and has drunk in the company of Colley Cibber. It is said that Pope has acknowledged many of the emendations made in Theobald's second edition of Shakespeare and invited Colley

Cibber to dinner and even wrote verses for James Moore. Pope gives these examples to prove his pretended humility and gentle nature inspite of provocation.

24. *Born to no pride inheriting no Strife,  
Nor marrying Discord in a noble wife,  
Stranger to civil and religious rage,  
The good man walk'd innoxious thro' his age.*

[ Lines 392-95 ]

Towards the conclusion of his epistle addressed to Arbuthnot, Pope speaks proudly and eloquently about his parents. They are both well descended and are the very embodiment of virtue throughout their lives. They are upright and straight-forward.

To the credit of Pope's father, he has inherited no pride and no strife, In other words, he is humble and without vanity and it is never in his nature to quarrel. He has a happy wedded life with his wife ( i.e. Pope's mother ) because he is never a source of discord. Probably Alexander Pope, the satirist, is slyly referring to Dryden and Addison who got advancement in life by seeking marriage alliances with noble families. In both these cases there was discord or domestic unhappiness.

Then Pope tells that his father is free from all political and religious fanaticism and has lived his life throughout, in an innoxious and peaceful manner.

In these lines Pope pays a highest tribute to his father and establishes his love and admiration for him.

25. *Me, let the tender office long engage,  
To rock the cradle of reposing Age,  
With lenient arts extend a Mother's breath.*

[ Lines 408-10 ]

While concluding his epistle addressed to Arbuthnot, Pope expresses his fervent desire to be able to do his duty by serving his old mother for a long time. He wants "to rock the cradle of reposing Age" meaning to attend on his mother in her last days of old age ( for she lived for over 90 years ) and make her comfortable and cheerful by his affectionate attention and service. He hopes that "the lenient arts" or the gentle attention and service should be able to prolong her life.

These lines are considered to be the tenderest of all the lines of Pope and they speak of the poet's love and devotion towards

his mother. But the *bona fide* of these lines is doubted, by at least one commentator who ascribes the date of composition to some years later on, *i.e.*, after the death of Pope's mother.

But referring to these lines Leslie Stephen observes: "If there are more tender and exquisite lines expressed in the language I know not where to find them".

## XX

### SELECT LITERARY CRITICISM

(Extracts)

GEOFFREY TILLOTSON : (From "*Essays in Criticism and Research*, published by Cambridge University Press, London).

"Like Keats and the young Milton, Pope was a country poet before he was a town poet. We have heard too exclusively of Pope's urban preoccupation with morals and satire. His world of experience was as extensive as that of any other poet. Pope is held to be deficient in a sense of beauty, in the amount of beauty he experienced and in the quality of that experience. Actually he was as sensitive to aesthetic experience as young Milton, and probably as sensitive to it as the young Keats. Spence preserved some important fragments of his aesthetics. He shows Pope on the Thames receiving 'The Idea of the Picturesque, from the swan just gilded with the sun amidst the shade of a tree over the water.'.....

It is part of the way that everything for Pope is centralized in man, in men, in human character and the visible instruments upon which human character orchestrates its fine or broken music. Pope is often laughing at man-made beauty since it is so often misused by man, since it so often exemplifies the proud canker in his soul. But in itself he finds it beautiful.....

In the later works the element of beauty is restricted. The point here is that that element is as intensely perceived as in the works of any great poet. Because it is all controlled, critics have been apt to think there was nothing to control.

Pope controls the elements of beauty not only in its amount but in its manner of expression. He formularizes the expression of it to fit the geometrical subtleties of his couplets. And moreover, he often itemizes it by a process analogous to deduction. ....

He distinguished, he told Spence, between sweetness and softness in versification, which will serve to indicate the gradations of his sensitiveness to sound.....

Since all these activities are usually found working together in a poem of Pope's this is the best answer for anyone who considers a simple cause like ill-nature to have accounted for his satiric poetry. Pope had his hatreds as his contemporaries had theirs for him. But his sense of the strenuous requirements of his verse promoted the personal grudge into a larger emotional context, the disinfecting context of hard work, and finally of great poetry. When one reads the character of Sporus, one's eyes are not on Hervey. It is as much as they can do to receive the fire of words. Hervey's character is for Pope an entrance into a brilliantly sensuous world every atom of which is vital, a world as exciting to the aesthetic sense as those of the 'Nun's Priest's Tale' or of 'Lamia'.

Moreover, hatred as an inspiration for Pope's satire has been overstated in importance. The emotion of pity is often as powerfully at work :

*Who would not weep, if Atticus were he ?.....*

Satiric poetry such as this affects the primary human emotions, even in Matthew Arnold's sense which limited the meaning to the nobler of those emotions.....

No other poet has found his sense of beauty so closely and continuously allied to his sense of human values. No other poet has put or answered the question how to live with tender concern and more pointed wisdom. In his trembling eye a virtue was as dear as a flower.

Pope's later work, therefore, is rooted in Man.

Within this human bound his poems explore a great variety of topics. To begin with, there are Pope's friends and men like the Man of Ross, who are praised ; and there are his 'enemies' who are analysed as if with the sharpest instruments of a vivisectionist. The friends may seem to be posed in too golden a light, the enemies in too poisonous a limelight : Pope's scorn can be so intense that he seems to overstep the elected bounds of 'Nature' and write personally as a 'Romantic' poet. But his merciless, at times feminine, emphasis and his deadly quiet have the effect of sharpening the moral, the general truth.

Pope for the most part abides by what 'oft' was thought, and his task is to express it 'ne'er so well'. He deliberates over



the material existing in everyman's mind till he finds that his own sense of its quality is prompting the perfect expression. It is in this best expression that Pope's originality most obviously shows itself. He is not out to surprise by his thoughts, his metre, his 'form'. And yet his poetry is full of surprises. These are often the surprises of finding a hot fire made out of a few sticks, and made out of the sticks which in the hands of other poets had remained unflammable."

LESLIE STEPHEN : ( From '*Alexander Pope*' E.—M. L. Published by Macmillan Co., London. )

"His verses are an excellent specimen of his declamatory style—polished, epigrammatic, and well expressed, and though keeping far below the regions of true poetry, preserving just that level which would commend them to the literary statesmen and the politicians at Will's and Button's.

.....As soon as Pope has a chance of expressing his personal antipathies or (to do him bare justice) his personal attachments, his lines begin to glow. When he is trying to preach, to be ethical and philosophical, he is apt to fall into mouthing and to lose his place ; but when he can forget his stilts, or point his morality by some concrete and personal instance every word is alive. And it is this which makes the epilogues and more especially the prologue to the satires (i.e., 'Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot'), his most impressive performances.....The best way of learning to enjoy Pope is to get by heart the epistle to Arbuthnot. The epistle is, as I have said, his Apologia.....

To explain either (Pope's poetical as well as personal characteristics), we must remember that he was a man of impulses ; at one instant a mere incarnate thrill of gratitude or generosity, and in the next of spite or jealousy.....Though nominally the poet of reason, he was the very antithesis of the man who is reasonable in the highest sense ;.....His emotion came in sudden jets and gushes, instead of a continuous stream. The same peculiarity deprives his poetry of continuous harmony or profound unity of conception.

.....But on the other hand he can perceive admirably all that can be seen at a glance from a single point of view. Though he could not be continuous, he could return again and again to the same point ; he could polish, correct, eliminate

superfluities, and compress his meaning more and more closely, till he has constructed short passages of imperishable excellence. ....Scarcely any one, as is often remarked, has left so large a proportion of quotable phrases, and, indeed, to the present he survives chiefly by the current coinage of that kind which bears his image and superscription.

This familiar remark may help us to solve the old problem whether Pope was, or rather in what sense he was a poet. Much of his work may be fairly described as rhymed prose, differing from prose not in substance or tone of feeling, but only in the form of expression.....He aims at giving us the refined and doubly distilled essence of the conversation of the statesmen and courtiers of his time.....That imaginary audience is always looking over his shoulder, applauding a good hit, chuckling over allusions to the last bit of scandal, and ridiculing any extravagance, tending to romance or sentimentalism..... They liked in the first place thorough polish. They could appreciate a perfectly turned phrase, an epigram which concentrated into a couplet volume of quick observations, a smart saying from Rochefoucauld or La Bruyere, which gave an edge to worldly wisdom..... This triteness blinds us to the singular felicity with which the observations have been versified, a felicity which makes many of the phrases still proverbial.....

Nor can Pope often rise to that level at which alone satire is transmuted into the higher class of poetry. To accomplish that feat, if, indeed, it be possible, the poet must not simply ridicule the fantastic tricks of poor mortals, but show how they appear to the angels who weep over them.....Pope can never rise above the crowd.....The element, which may fairly be called poetical, is derived from an inferior source ; but sometimes has passion enough in it to lift above mere prose.

Pope's best writing, I have said, is the essence of conversation. It has the quick movement, the boldness and brilliance, which we suppose to be the attributes of the best talk. Of course the apparent facility is due to conscientious labour. In the Prologue and Epilogue and the best parts of the imitations of Horace, he shows such consummate mastery of his peculiar style, that we forget the monotonous metre.....But imagine the very pith and essence of such talk brought to a focus, concentrated in the smallest possible space, with the infinite dexterity of a thoroughly trained hand, and you have the kind of writing in which Pope is unrivalled ; polished prose with occasional gleams

of genuine poetry—the Epistle to Arbuthnot and the Epilogue to the Satires.”

G. WILSON KNIGHT : *'Laureate of Peace'* on the Genius of Alexander Pope ( published by Routledge & Kegan Paul, London ).

“His focal centre is man ; not man dramatically interlocked with a great mesh of natural and cosmic energies, as in Shakespeare ; nor man and his universe torn by the ‘mighty opposites’ of conscience and culture, as in Milton ; nor man viewed variously according to the subject, political, religious or literary, as in Dryden ; but Man who in himself must achieve the synthesis or harmonization which religious and political schemes are always claiming to achieve for him, and with no great warlike or other action to assist his self-escape.

.....The ‘Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot’ itself gives us Pope’s most comprehensive defence :

Curst be the verse, how well soe’er it flow,  
That tends to make one worthy man my foe.

Here and elsewhere he is quite certain of his rectitude. This epistle shows a blend of violence and gentleness, varying between attack and pathos, social criticism and autobiography, swelling and subsiding with an undulatory movement, whose balance repays attention. His chief boasts, of looking after his mother to the last and cherishing a deep friendship, are not those of a misanthrope : he is never submerged by his own satire, but well above it. He may have been mistaken in actual judgments—how can any man be certain of another’s worthiness or knavery ?—but his personal reactions are being used as the explosive force behind a satire which becomes elsewhere a quite general indictment. I believe a final understanding will acquit him of unnecessary cruelty, though it might have to be couched in intellectual terms which his more intuitive sense of his own righteousness need not have taken into account. Anyway, his persons are today as fictional as Iago and Cloten, and the writing indisputably holds the kind of integrity needed for great poetry. I ask that we bring such a view to a short inspection of Pope’s ‘Imitations of Horace’ ( 1733-8 ).

Such a view is at least fictionally forced, since these epistles, like that to Arbuthnot, some times dramatize the poet himself, showing him in a favourable light.

.....The two driving forces in Pope's work are : ( i ) his devotion to poetry, and ( ii ) his passion for a genuine ethic. These are twin aspects of a single ideal.....In both art and ethic Pope stresses the need for vitality : his 'Inferno', 'The Dunciad', is full of dull writers : but he is not thinking of entertainment.

Vitality conditions penetration, insight and virtue. The business of poetry is involved closely with what we mean by 'eternity', and so is the business of man.....

Pope's words are well-chosen entities, they exist almost as little 'personalities' ; and this comes from their holding traditional and communal, though mainly aristocratic associations. They are to be contrasted with the ignition-quality of metaphor, and yet, again, they are not snatched cold from the outer void of mental speculation or divine aspiration ; they are warm like a rich necklace, warm from human contact. They are not cliché's. A cliché is a word or phrase worn dull by vulgar use ; these are words worn bright by noble use. They are valuable with the value we attach to an heirloom, or some old volume once in famous hands. In Pope's hands these words of pedigree come newly alive ; if they did not, there would be no honour in their use. Both nouns and verbs have, as words, a simple, yet lustrous life. It is amazing how much is done by nouns and verbs alone, and their vivid interplay within a lucid syntax sets going a continual dance : Pope's is a poetic universe alive with a myriad electronic solids. There is nothing academic, nothing static about it. If we say that his diction has 'lustre', we mean by this that it has life, like the sheen of life on a human body. And indeed, his employment of a style deriving from a rich assortment of well-chosen, well-handled and well-valued 'words', which themselves by association and heritage somehow do alone, as separate units or wholes, what is elsewhere done by metaphor, is exactly one with Pope's major statement on life ; his concentration not on vast and settled, or unsettled schemes of religion or philosophy, but rather on a world of separate, individual, free and antonomous persons, as integral units within whom the universal purpose—for *that* is never forgotten—must be played out, and who, in their turn, are playing out their little destiny in face of a universal purpose."

LOWELL : (from *'My Study Windows'*).

The sincerity of Byron's admiration of Pope has been, it seems to me, too hastily doubted. What he admired in him was that patience in careful finish which he felt to be wanting in himself and in most of his contemporaries. Pope's assailants went so far as to make a defect of what, rightly considered, was a distinguished merit, though the amount of it was exaggerated. The weak point in the case was that his nicety concerned itself wholly about the phrase, leaving the thought to be as faulty as it would, and that it seldom extended beyond the couplet, often not beyond a single verse. His serious poetry, therefore, at its best, is a succession of loosely strung epigrams, and no poet more often than he makes the second line of the couplet a mere train-bearer to the first. His more ambitious works may be defined as careless thinking carefully versified. Lessing was one of the first to see this, and accordingly he tells us that "his great, I will not say greatest, merit lay in what we call the mechanic of poetry." Lessing, with his usual insight, parenthetically qualifies his statement, for where Pope, as in the "Rape of the lock," found a subject exactly level with his genius, he was able to make what, taken for all in all, is the most perfect poem in the language.

It will hardly be questioned that the man who writes what is still piquant and rememberable, a century and a quarter after his death, was a man of genius. But there are two modes of uttering such things as cleave to the memory of mankind. They may be said or sung. I do not think that Pope's verse anywhere sings, but it should seem that the abiding presence of fancy in his best work forbids his exclusion from the rank of poet. The atmosphere in which he habitually dwelt was an essentially prosaic one, the language habitual to him was that of conversation and society, so that he lacked the help of the fresher dialect which seems like inspiration in the elder poets. His range of associations was of that narrow kind which is always vulgar, whether it be found in the village or the court. Certainly he has not the force and majesty of Dryden in his better moods, but he has a grace, a finesse, an art of being pungent, a sensitiveness to impressions, that would incline us to rank him with Voltaire (whom in many ways he so much resembles), as an author with whom the gift of writing was primary, and that of verse secondary. 'No other poet that I

remember ever wrote prose which is so purely prose as his ; and yet, in any impartial criticism, the "Rape of the Lock" sets him even as a poet far above many men more largely endowed with poetic feeling and insight than he.

A great deal must be allowed to Pope for the age in which he lived, and not a little, I think, for the influence of Swift. In his own province he still stands unapproachably alone. If to be the greatest satirist of individual men, rather than of human nature, if to be the highest expression which the life of the court and the ball-room has ever found in verse, if to have added more phrases to our language than any other but Shakespeare, if to have charmed four generations make a man a great poet, then he is one. He was the chief founder of an artificial style of writing, which in his hands was living and powerful, because he used it to express artificial modes of thinking, and an artificial state of society. Measured by any high standard of imagination, he will be found wanting, tried by any test of wit, he is unrivalled."

NORMAN CALLAN : (From *Dryden to Johnson* in the Pelican Guide to English Literature, IV Vol., published by Penguin Books Ltd., Middlesex.)

"It is, of course, true that all considerable poetry depends partly on the relationship between style and content ; but poetry like Pope's is more dependent on our recognizing this relationship than let us say, poetry like Wordsworth's. Moreover, there are two kinds of relationship possible : that in which the poet seems to gain his effect by triumphing over his material, and that in which he seems to suggest that no difficulties exist because the medium is so perfectly suited to the theme. Donne's poetry, Milton's, and perhaps Wordsworth's belong to the first kind ; Pope's to the second. Inevitably the first is more spectacular : it conveys a greater sense of power, if only because it calls attention to its own emotional urgency. The second calls for far greater perceptiveness on the part of the reader. If we fail to notice the exquisite judgment with which theme and tone are linked in 'To a Young Lady' or 'The Rape of the Lock', or the imaginative power with which the epic possibilities of the theme have been exploited in 'The Dunciad', we shall see little to attract us but technical virtuosity.

Moreover, unless we recognize in this term 'judgment' something more than an ability to know when to stop, we

shall certainly miss most of the overtones in Pope's poetry. In Pope's case 'judgment' is rather the intuitive perception of the fitness of means for an end. It is from this perception and from the fusion of materials produced in its application that the emotional force arises.....

We have so far observed peculiarities of Pope's work as they are to be seen in particular poems. These, however, arise from something which is to be recognized in all his poetry—the remarkable integration of the world in which his imagination moves. The concept of unified (or dissociated) sensibility has been of great value to understanding of seventeenth-century poetry. Unluckily, however, we have to regard a unified sensibility as the perquisite of a small group of writers: we are too ready to say with Falstaff, 'who hath it? He that died before 1660.' Pope's poetic universe is no less closely integrated than that of (say) George Herbert, as I hope will appear. But we must also beware of making another mistake, by claiming that it is the *same* universe, and that the approach to the poetry of Pope is not essentially different from the approach to that of a seventeenth-century metaphysical. The terminal points of Herbert's universe or Donne's are God and Man: Pope begins and ends with Man. But granted the limitation this imposes, there remains between that beginning and end the almost infinite scope of human activity. And it is the way his poetry expresses one aspect of this multifariousness in terms of another that makes it ultimately so satisfying.

JOHNSON: (From *'Lives of the poets.'*)

...He considered poetry as the business of his life, and however he might seem to lament his occupation, he followed it with constancy; to make verses was his first labour, and to mend them was his last.....

The notions of Dryden were formed by comprehensive speculation, and those of Pope by minute attention. There is more dignity in the knowledge of Dryden, and more certainly in that of Pope.....

Poetry was not the sole praise of either, for both excelled likewise in prose; but Pope did not borrow his prose from his predecessor. The style of Dryden is capricious and varied, that of Pope is cautious and uniform; Dryden obeys the motions of his own mind, Pope confines his mind to his own rules of

composition. Dryden is sometimes vehement and rapid ; Pope is always smooth, uniform, and gentle. Dryden's page is a natural field, rising into inequalities, and diversified by the varied exuberance of abundant vegetation ; Pope's is a velvet lawn, shaven by the scythe, and levelled by the roller.

Of genius, that power which constitutes a poet ; that quality without which judgment is cold and knowledge is inert ; that energy which collects, combines, amplifies, and animates ; the superiority must, with some hesitation, be allowed to Dryden. It is not to be inferred that of this poetical vigour Pope had only little, because Dryden had more, for every other writer since Milton must give place to Pope ; and even of Dryden it must be said that if he has brighter paragraphs he has not better poems. Dryden's performances were always hasty, either excited by some external occasion, or extorted by domestic necessity ; he composed without consideration, and published without correction. What his mind could supply at call, or gather in one excursion, was all that he sought, and all that he gave. The dilatory caution of Pope enabled him to condense his sentiments, to multiply his images, and to accumulate all that study might produce or chance might supply. If the flights of Dryden therefore are higher, Pope continues longer on the wing. If of Dryden's fire the blaze is brighter, of Pope's the heat is more regular and constant. Dryden often surpasses expectation, and Pope never falls below it. Dryden is read with frequent astonishment, and Pope with perpetual delight."

HAZLITT : (from '*Lecture on Pope*').

"The question, whether Pope was a poet, has hardly yet been settled, and is hardly worth settling ; for if he was not a great poet, he must have been a great prose writer, that is, he was a great writer of some sort. He was a man of exquisite faculties, and of the most refined taste ; and as he chose verse (the most obvious distinction of poetry) as the vehicle to express his ideas, he has generally passed for a poet, and a good one. If, indeed, by a great poet, we mean one who gives the utmost grandeur to our conceptions of nature, or the utmost force to the passions of the heart, Pope was not in this sense a great poet ; for the bent, the characteristic power of his mind, lay the clean contrary way ; namely, in representing things as they appear to the indifferent observer, stripped of prejudice and



passion, as in his Critical Essays ; or in representing them in the most contemptible and insignificant point of view, as in his satires ; or in clothing the little with mock-dignity, as in his poems of Fancy ; or in adorning the trivial incidents and familiar relations of life with the utmost elegance of expression, and all the flattering illusions of friendship or self-love, as in his Epistles. He was not then distinguished as a poet of lofty enthusiasm, of strong imagination, with a passionate sense of the beauties of nature, or a deep insight into the workings of the heart ; but he was a wit, and critic, a man of sense, of observation, and the world, with a keen relish for the elegances of art, or of nature when embellished by art, a quick tact for propriety of thought and manners as established by the forms and customs of society, a refined sympathy with the sentiments and habitudes of human life, as he felt them within the little circle of his family and friends. He was, in a word, the poet, not of nature, but of art....."

CAMPBELL : ( from '*Specimens of the British Poets*', 1819. )

...That his (Pope's) peculiar rhythm and manner are the very best in the whole range of our poetry need not be asserted .....His pauses have little variety, and his phrases are too much weighed in the balance of antithesis. But let us look to the spirit that points his antithesis, and to the rapid precision of his thoughts, and we shall forgive him for being too antithetic and sententious..... Pope's discrimination lay in the lights and shades of human manners, which are at least as interesting as those of rocks and leaves. In moral eloquence he is for ever *densus et instans sibi*. The mind of a poet employed in concentrating such lines as these descriptive of creative power, which

"Builds life on death, on change duration founds,  
And bids th' eternal wheels to know their rounds"

might well be excused for not descending to the minutely picturesque. The vindictive personality of his satire is a fault of the man, and not of the poet. He glows with passion in the 'Epistle of Eloisa ; and displays a lofty feeling much above that of the satirist and the man of the world, in his prologue to 'Cato' and his 'Epistle' to Lord Oxford, 'I know not how to designate the possessor of such gifts but by the name of a genuine poet.....

BYRON : (from '*Observations upon an Article in Blackwood's Magazine*', 1820).

.....It is this very harmony, particularly in Pope, which has raised the vulgar and atrocious cant against him—because his versification is perfect, it is assumed that it is his only perfection ; because his truths are clear, it is asserted that he has no invention ; and because he is always intelligible, it is taken for granted that he has no genius. We are sneeringly told that he is the 'Poet of Reason,' as if this was a reason for his being no poet.

.....He who can reconcile poetry with truth and wisdom, is the only true '*poet*' in its real sense, '*the maker,*' '*the creator,*'—why must this mean the '*liar,*' the '*feigner,*' the '*tale-teller*'? A man may make and create better things than these.....He is the only poet that never shocks ; the only poet whose *faultlessness* has been made his reproach. Cast your eye over his productions ; consider their extent, and contemplate their variety—pastoral, passion, mock-heroic, translation, satire, ethics—all excellent and often perfect. If his great charm be his '*melody*', how comes it that foreigners adore him even in their diluted translations ?

## XXI

### SELECT QUESTIONS

1. Give an account of Alexander Pope's life and work.
2. Describe the characteristic features of the Age in which Pope lived and the place he has been assigned in it.

or

"Pope is a classic, but a classic in an age of prose." Discuss.

3. Write an essay on Pope as a poet.
4. Write an essay on Pope as a satirist.
5. Give an account of Dr. Arbuthnot to whom the epistle was addressed.
6. Describe briefly the evolution of thought in the *Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot*.
7. Give a brief outline of the Atticus Passage and point out its significance.
8. Give an account of the Sporus Passage and offer your comments on it.
9. Compare and contrast Pope's Atticus and Sporus Passages and offer your comments thereon.
10. Attempt a character-sketch of Alexander Pope.
11. *The Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot* is called Pope's *Apologia Pro Vita Sua*. Discuss.
12. Dr. Johnson says : "If Pope be not a poet, where is poetry to be found". Discuss.
13. "The Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot, now arbitrarily called the *Prologue to the Satires* is a performance, consisting, as it seems, of many fragments wrought into one design, which by the union of scattered beauties contains more striking paragraphs than could probably have been brought together into an occasional work." Examine this statement of Dr. Johnson.
14. "There is a strange mixture of honesty and hypocrisy".

Examine this remark of Leslie Stephen with reference to *The Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot*.

15. "The Epistle, singularly perfect and rounded in form, is, notwithstanding its fragmentary origin, of the highest interest from an ethical as well as literary point of view." Illustrate the truth of this remark made by Sir A. W. Ward.
16. "When Pope is trying to preach, to be ethical and philosophical, he is apt to fall into mouthing and to lose his place; but when he can forget his stilts, or point his morality by some concrete personal instance, every word is alive." Discuss this remark of Leslie Stephen with reference to his *Moral Essay*, *Essay on Man* and *Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot*.
17. Write an essay on Pope's use of the heroic couplet.
18. Write an essay on the profession of men of letters as depicted in the *Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot*.

## XXII

### CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE

#### (Pope's Life and Work)

1688. (21st May) Birth of Alexander Pope in the city of London. He was the only child of his elderly parents.
1700. The Popes moved to Binfield (Berkshire) where they stayed till 1716.
1709. Publication of *Pastorals* (written at the age of 16) in Jacob Tonson's Miscellany which contained the pastorals of Ambrose Philips also.
1711. Publication of *An Essay on Criticism* which won him rapid reputation and also the attention of Addison's circle.
1712. (1) *The Rape of the Lock* (in two Cantos) was published in Bernard Lintot's Miscellany.  
(2) *Messiah* (published in the *Spectator*).
1713. (1) *Windsor Forest*.  
(2) *Ode on Vt. Cecilia's Day*.  
(3) Prologue to Addison's *Cato*.  
(4) Essays in the *Guardian*.  
(5) Pope became acquainted with Swift.  
(6) Opened subscription list for his proposed *Homer*.  
(7) Took part in the activities of the Scriblerus Club, and also during the next year.
1714. Publication of the enlarged edition of *The Rape of the Lock* (in five Cantos).
1715. (1) Issue of the first volume of Pope's translation of Homer's *Iliad* in heroic couplets.  
(2) *The Temple of Fame* was also published.
1716. (1) *The Iliad* (Volume II).  
(2) The Popes moved to Chiswick.
1717. (1) *The Iliad* (Volume III).  
(2) Death of his father.

- (3) *Works* including *Verses to the Memory of an Unfortunate Lady* and *Eloisa to Abelard*.
- (4) Assisted John Gay in writing the Comedy, *Three Hours after Marriage*.
- 1718. *The Iliad* (Volume IV).
- 1719. Migration to Twickenham with his mother.
- 1720. *The Iliad* (Volumes V and VI).
- 1721 (1) Epistle to Addison.  
(2) Epistle to Robert Earl of Oxford.
- 1722 Portrait of Atticus, a satire on Addison, printed without Pope's permission.
- 1723 Edited the works of John Sheffield, Duke of Buckingham.
- 1725 (1) Pope's edition of *The Works of Shakespeare* (in six Volumes).  
(2) *The Odyssey* (Volumes I and III.)
- 1726 *The Odyssey* (Volumes IV and V).
- 1727 *Miscellanies* ( Volumes I and II ) in collaboration with Swift.
- 1728 (1) *Miscellanies* (Volume III).  
(2) *The Dunciad* (three books, dealing with Theobald as hero). It is a satire on Dullness and it appeared anonymously.
- 1729. Enlarged edition of *Dunciad*.
- 1731-5. *Moral Essays*.
- 1733-4. *An Essay on Man*.
- 1733-8. *Satires and Epistles of Horace Imitated*.
- 1733. His mother's death.
- 1735. (1) Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot.  
(2) Second volume of Pope's Works (subsequent to 1717).  
(3) His *Literary correspondence*.
- 1737. Authorised edition of his *Letters*.
- 1738. (1) *One Thousand Seven Hundred and Thirty Eight* (satirical dialogues).  
(2) *The Universal Prayer*.
- 1741. Pope's Works in Prose.

1742. *The New Dunciad*.  
1743. *The Dunciad* in four books.  
1744. Death due to dropsy and asthma. Burial in the Twickenham Church.  
1751. The first *Collective* edition of Pope's Works.  
1871-89. The standard edition of Pope's Works, edited by Elwin and Courthope.

## XXIII

## INDEX TABLE

(*Proper names referred to in the Epistle in the alphabetical order*)

Proper Names	Line No.	Time	Reference
1. Addison	192	1672-1719	Joseph Addison, English essayist, famous for his contributions to the <i>Tatler</i> and <i>Spectator</i> .
2. Ammon's son	117	4th century B. C.	Alexander, the Great ; King of Macedonia and conqueror of the East.
3. Arbuthnot	(Title)	1667-1735	Dr. John Arbuthnot, friend and physician to Pope.
4. Arthur	23	1706-1722	Arthur Moore, Member of Parliament and Commissioner of Trade.
5. Atticus	214	109-32 B. C.	Titus Pomponius Atticus, a very rich Roman citizen. Here, it refers to Addison.
6. Bard (the)	179	1675-1749	Amrose Philips, an author of pastorals.
7. Bavius	99	1st century B. C.	A minor poet pilloried by Virgil. His name, (also Maevius), is used for an inferior versifier.
8. Bentley	164	1662-1742	Richard Bentley, Trinity College, Cambridge. He published an edition of Milton's <i>Paradise Lost</i> in 1732.



Proper Names	Line No.	Time	Reference
9. Bestia	391	—	The name of a Roman Consul—Calpurnius Bestia. Here the name refers to the Duke of Marlborough who had a private fortune from the wars of Spanish succession.
10. Bubo	280	1691-1762	Bubo Doddington, later Lord Melcombe. According to A. W. Ward, he was "the author of a well-known Diary, and the confidential advisor of Frederick, Prince of Wales." He was a liberal rather than a discriminating patron of literary men.
11. Budgel	378	1686-1737	Eustace Budgel. She was a cousin of Addison.
12. Bufo	232	1661-1715	Charles Montague, Earl of Halifax. He was a Whig statesman.
13. Burnet	146	1643-1715	Gilbert Burnet, a Bishop of Salisbury.
14. Cato	209	95-46 B. C.	Marcus Porcius Cato of Utica (theme of Addison's tragedy <i>Cato</i> , produced in 1713.)
15. Codrus	85	—	A traditional name for a poetaster.
16. Colley	97	1671-1757	Colley Cibber, Poet Laureate since 1730. (He was the hero of Pope's <i>Dunciad</i> ).
17. Congreve	138	1670-1729	William Congreve, an author famous for his <i>Double Dealer</i> , <i>Love for Love</i> and <i>The Way of the World</i> .

Proper Names	Line No.	Time	Reference
18. Cook	146	(Pope's age)	Either Roger Coke (an author) or Thomas Cook the translator of Hesiod.
19. Curl	53	1675-1747	Edmund Curl, who was a notorious publisher in the Age of Pope, with great influence over almost all the authors of the period.
20. Cornus	25	1676-1745	This name is generally attributed to Lord Walpole. A leader of the Whig Party in England. He was the father of Horace Walpole.
21. Dennis	152	1657-1734	John Dennis. He was a critic in the age of Pope.
22. Dryden	141	1631-1700	John Dryden, the famous satirist of his time.
23. Fanny	149	1696-1743	Lord Hervey. Here the name refers to any foolish poet.
24. Father dead	355	d. 1717	Pope's father, Alexander Pope.
25. Frantic wife	25	18th century	Lady Walpole—Christian name Margaret. She married Lord Walpole in 1725 and deserted him in 1734.
26. Friend (O !)	406	1667-1735	Dr. John Arbuthnot.
27. Friend in exile	355	1715-1723	Henry St. John Bolingbroke, first Viscount of Bolingbroke. He was one of the most brilliant men of his time. He was a most powerful orator.
28. Ciuth	137	1661-1719	Sir Samuel Garth, the poet. He was also physician extraordinary to George I.

Proper Names	Line No.	Time	Reference
28. Gay	256	1685-1732	John Gay, the author of <i>The Beggar's Opera</i> .
29. Giddy Son	23	18th century	James Moore-Smythe, son of Arthur Moore.
30. Gildon	151	1665-1724	Charles Gildon, an industrious hack-writer of the age. He preferred Tickell as a translator, and Ambrose Philips as a pastoral poet, to Pope.
31. Good man	395	d. 1717	Pope's father.
32. Granville	135	1667-1735	George Granville. Pope dedicated his <i>Windsor Forest</i> to him.
33. Great George	222	18th century	King George II (Ruled 1727-60).
34. Henley	98	1692-1756	John Henley, a famous orator and preacher.
35. Homer	124	9th century B. C.	The illustrious Greek poet, the author of the <i>Iliad</i> and the <i>Odyssey</i> .
36. Horace	116	65-8 B. C.	A famous Roman Poet.
37. Japhet	363	1662-1734	Japhet Crook, also called Sir Peter Stranger.
38. John	1	(Pope's Age)	Servant of Pope by name John Searle.
39. John (St.)	141	1678-1751	Henry St. John, Viscount Bolingbroke, a famous Tory Statesman.
40. Lintot	62	1675-1736	Bernard Lintot, a famous publisher of Pope's time.
41. Maro	122	70-19 B. C.	The name of an old ancient Roman poet. Full name is Publius Virgilius Maro.
42. Maudlin poetess	16	—	Mrs. Sykings, an Irish poetess.

Proper Names	Line No.	Time	Reference
43. Midas.	69	—	A legendary king of Phrygia who was cursed by Apollo to have a pair of ass's ears.
44. Mistress	376	—	Lady Delorain, wife of William Windham.
45. Mother	410	d. 1733	Pope's mother.
46. Oldmixon	146	1673-1742	John Oldmixon, the author of the Secret History of Europe (a Whig pamphleteer and historian).
47. One poet	336	1688-1744	Alexander Pope, referring to himself.
48. Ovid	118	43 B.C.-18A. D.	A Roman poet.
49. Parson	15	d. 1730	Lawrence Eusden. He was Rector of Coningsby in Lincolnshire.
50. Philips	100	1675-1749	Ambrose Philips, an author of some pastoral poems.
51. Pitholeon	49	(Age of Pope)	Leonard Welsted, a poet and critic of the time. (This name is also attributed to Thomas Cooke, the translator of Hesiod.)
52. Queen	417	18th century	Anne, Queen of England, during 1702-14.
53. Rochester	140	1662-1717	Francis Atterbury, Bishop of Rochester.
54. Sapho	101	1689-1762	Lady Mary Wortley Montague, a distinguished literary woman of the time.
55. Sheffield	139	1648-1721	John Sheffield. He was the Duke of Buckingham. He was also a poet and statesman.

Proper Names	Line No.	Time	Reference
56. Sir Will	280	d. 1755	Sir William Yonge, a supporter of Walpole.
57. Somers	138	1651-1716	John Baron Somers, a leader of the Whig Party.
58. Stranger (A)	55	18th century	Barford, an author.
59. Swift	138	1667-1745	Jonathan Swift, the famous satirist.
60. Talbot	139	1660-1718	Charles Talbot, the Duke of Shrewsbury.
61. Tate	190	1652-1715	Nahum Tate (succeeded Shadwell as Poet Laureate in 1690).
62. Tibald	164	1688-1744	Lewis Theobald, a commentator of Shakespeare.
63. Walsh	136	1663-1708	William Walsh, a famous critic.
64. Welsted	375	(Pope's age)	A Whig journalist who wrote a satire on Pope and his friends.



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